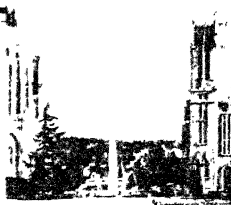


THE TRANSITION  
FROM THE  
ANCIENT  
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**The Berkshire Studies in European History**

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# THE TRANSITION FROM THE ANCIENT TO THE MEDIEVAL WORLD

BY

R. F. ARRAGON

REED COLLEGE, PORTLAND, ORE.



NEW YORK

HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY

PRINTED IN THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

## PREFACE

The college teacher of general European history is always confronted with the task of finding adequate reading for his classes which is neither too specialized and technical nor too elementary. For many topics, including several of the greatest importance, no such material is at the moment available. Moreover, in too many instances, good reading which undeniably does exist is in the form of a chapter in a larger work and is therefore too expensive for adoption as required reading under normal conditions.

*The Berkshire Studies in European History* have been planned to meet this situation. The topics selected for treatment are those on which there is no easily accessible reading of appropriate length adequate for the needs of a course in general European history. The authors, all experienced teachers, are in nearly every instance actively engaged in the class room and intimately acquainted with its problems. They will avoid a merely elementary presentation of facts, giving instead an interpretive discussion suited to the more mature point of view of college students.

No pretense is made, of course, that these *Studies* are contributions to historical literature in the scholarly sense. Each author, nevertheless, is sufficiently a specialist in the period of which he writes to be familiar with the sources and to have used the latest scholarly contributions to his subject. In order that those who

desire to read further on any topic may have some guidance short bibliographies of works in western European languages are given, with particular attention to books of recent date.

Each *Study* is designed as a week's reading. The division into three approximately equal chapters, many of them self-contained and each suitable for one day's assignment, should make the series as a whole easily adaptable to the present needs of college classes. The editors have attempted at every point to maintain and emphasize this fundamental flexibility.

Maps and diagrams will occasionally be furnished with the text when specially needed but a good historical atlas, such as that of Shepherd, is presupposed throughout.

R. A. N.

L. B. P.

S. R. P.

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## I

### THE FALL OF ROME

AT the threshold of European history stand the ruins of the Roman Empire. The nations of the West began their life in the shadow of aqueducts, triumphal arches and amphitheaters. Their lands were traversed by Roman roads and dotted with towns and villas. In Britain and along the Rhine and the Danube were walls and the sites of camps of the Roman army which had until lately resisted the barbarians. These were evidences of Rome's power not only for conquest but for the spread of classical civilization. They fell into decay, leaving vestiges in place-names and in ruins that were visible symbols to the Middle Ages or became buried treasures awaiting the spade of the archaeologist. More compelling in their influence upon the development of European life were the intangible remains that entered into men's thoughts and practices and institutions—the inheritance of language and law, of forms of landholding and labor, of art and philosophy, the Christian Church and the Roman imperial idea. These rather than the Teutonic migrations and conquests were the chief sources of the common elements of European civilization. It was these which gave unity of organization and culture to medieval Europe—a unity which has continued to mark the life of Europeans, though they have spread over the

Americas and the coasts of Africa and the Far East.

The Middle Ages are so named from their position as intermediary between the ancient and modern worlds. What we inherit from Graeco-Roman civilization is in large part what the Middle Ages took over from it. The terms "ancient" and "medieval" indicate that European history is not treated as following the course of a man's life from youth to age. They reverse the order and suggest that European civilization sprang not from the barbaric "youth" of Gauls, Iberians, and Germans, but from an advanced culture whose distance in the past leads us to call it "old." It was indeed old in experience, and its achievements and failures were a more important heritage of Europe in general than were the traditions of tribal society. The clans and tribes of northern and western Europe did not develop directly and independently into the Germanic kingdoms of the early Middle Ages. Pre-Roman Gaul and Spain, like Italy before them, were brought into the current of Mediterranean history by Greek and Phoenician commerce, by Roman armies and administration and by Latin culture and the Church. Centuries later, when the Roman Empire in the West yielded to decay and invasion, the Germanic invaders were soon conquered by the culture of their subjects, and it was not long before politics, Christianity and trade brought the more purely Teutonic Germany and Teutonized England under the same influence. This process assured Europe's heritage from Greece and Rome, and at the same time it completed the simplification and modification of ancient civilization which had been going on in the declining empire before the inva-

sions. Society and culture were so changed as to be no longer of the ancient world, and medieval history had begun. The study of how the great empire that ruled from Britain to Mesopotamia vanished and of what it left for medieval men to build with may therefore serve as an introduction to European history and as a help to an understanding of the Middle Ages.

The story of the decline has from the first attracted students of history for its elements of tragic drama and for the puzzle of its causes. The destruction of greatness, which to the ancients seemed an answer of the jealous gods to the overweening self-assurance of man, has perhaps never been illustrated on a vaster scale than in the fate of Rome in the centuries succeeding the reign of Marcus Aurelius. Edward Gibbon found the ideal topic for his purpose of producing a literary and historical classic in the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, "a revolution," he wrote, "which will ever be remembered, and is still felt, by the nations of the earth." This philosophic historian of the eighteenth century would not be accused of excess of sentiment, and yet so powerfully did Rome stir him at the age of twenty-seven that he said, twenty-five years later, "I can neither forget nor express the strong emotions which agitated my mind as I first approached and entered the *eternal city*." It was on this visit as he "sat musing amidst the ruins of the Capitol, while the barefooted friars were singing vespers in the temple of Jupiter, that the idea of writing the decline and fall of the city first started to" his mind. The theme gave materials for drama of grand propor-

tions, and Gibbon treated it with greatness of architecture and with eloquence.

#### THE PROBLEM OF THE FALL OF ROME

The problem of how and why Rome and ancient civilization fell challenged the philosophic curiosity of Gibbon, as it has challenged other students of society before and after his time. Interest in the question and conflict of opinion are as old as the problem itself. The sack of Rome by Alaric and the Visigoths in 410 A.D. gave St. Augustine occasion to write the *City of God* in denial of the responsibility of Christianity for the disaster to the great earthly city. Writers of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance carried on the speculation until in the sixteenth century Machiavelli, in his *Discourses* on Livy, began the modern examination of the problem in terms of the nature of man and of society without recourse to the idea of divine interference. What scholarship might contribute, Godefroy showed in the seventeenth century edition of the code of Theodosius by considering the evidence of Roman legislation for the conditions of the declining empire. In Gibbon's century, Montesquieu in his commentary on Roman history, *Considerations on the Causes of the Greatness of the Romans and of their Decline*, treated the question with the breadth and acuteness of observation and understanding of men and of social conditions that he showed in his better-known work on the *Spirit of the Laws*. The inquiry has passed from the scholarship and philosophy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to the more intensive and broader historical studies of the last hundred years.

Archaeology has increased the range of materials by adding inscriptions, papyri, and other remains to the legal and literary sources. Tireless analysis and comparison have wrested from all of these more complete information as to what happened in the last centuries of the empire. Fresh hypotheses have been advanced concerning the causes. Yet controversy rather than agreement has resulted, and the lure of the problem remains.

It holds indeed a distinct challenge for modern thought. To the ancients it was not incredible that their society might decay and vanish. Polybius (2nd century B.C.) was already, before the establishment of the Roman Empire, lamenting the decadence of Greece. Progress, though seen in the development of society in the past by the Roman poet Lucretius, was not the ancients' reading of the future. Stoicism held on the contrary that the society they knew would some day end, to be succeeded by another cycle identical with theirs. No such pessimism stamped Christian thought, but its golden age was not of this world and was to be heralded by the cataclysm pictured in Revelation. In modern centuries this future age of blessedness has been brought down to earth, and we place our hope in progress as the means to get us there. This has become a current conviction as to the destiny of our society, and, whereas in the eighteenth century progress was expected chiefly as the reward of unflagging intelligence striving toward perfection, in the nineteenth it gained, in common opinion at least, the sanction of inevitability as a natural process. To either of these optimistic views the fact that a civilization so significant for us as the ancient suffered decay



and a return to a simpler culture is challenging. It has for centuries furnished material to that pessimistic thought which has sensed decadence in modern culture. The shattering catastrophe of the World War and the critical issues of the modern social order and of scientific thought have focused more general attention upon the question of progress and regression and have given emphasis to gloomy prophecies such as those of Oswald Spengler in the *Decline of the West*. Suggestive therefore and yet baffling remains the fate of the Roman Empire. It is for us a unique example, since nowhere else is there for the western world so many-sided and so well-documented a process of the transformation of a mighty state and civilization.

The much celebrated "Fall of the Western Empire" in 476 A.D. meant little more than the disappearance of Roman emperors from Italy and was just a step in the German seizure of the West. The barbarian conquest itself, though it marked in a dramatic manner the end of Rome's greatness, was not the dominant fact in the decline of the Roman Empire. Even before the coming of the Germans and as early as the second century A.D., great changes were under way that were fundamentally transforming the life of the city and country, religion, education and the arts, and the imperial government. The early empire, which began as the principate of Augustus (31 B.C.-14 A.D.) and was the culmination of the attempts of the classical world to reconcile peace and liberty, disappeared amid the conflicting tendencies of disintegration and despotism. In the end, these divided the empire between them. Decentralization, aided by

German invasions, triumphed in the Latin lands of the West, which by the sixth century were in the hands of Theodoric the Ostrogoth and other German kings. Meanwhile in the East at Constantinople the Later Roman or Byzantine Empire embodied the principle of despotism, exemplified by Justinian (527-565). The military and bureaucratic autocracy of Justinian and the military and tribal kingship of the Germans were alike far from the mild civilian rule of the Antonine, or so-called "Good," emperors of the second century. The purpose of this chapter is to examine how such profound political changes took place in four or five centuries and what the results were in forming the structure of medieval society.

#### THE PRINCIPATE

The second century of the Christian era as well as of the Roman Empire, in which Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius ruled, affords a natural point of departure for the study of the transformation of the empire. Gibbon began his work with a masterly review of the material and social brilliance of this epoch. It gave him a standard of comparison by which to emphasize the degradation that soon followed. The principate established by Augustus, when he had brought to a close the century of civil strife that destroyed the Roman Republic, seems to have reached its apogee under these emperors. The western provinces were by this time dotted with prosperous cities, the imitators of Rome in culture, organization and public building, while Graeco-Oriental cities continued to flourish in the East. Through the ambition and patriotism of local magnates and the

example of the emperors, notably of Hadrian, the municipalities were still being adorned with arches and temples, baths and aqueducts, theaters and arenas. Army encampments, market-places and native villages were yet rising to the dignity of towns, narrowing the areas of clan and tribe. The policy of the emperors still left a considerable degree of local government to the cities and was raising them to a condition approaching equality throughout the empire by the extension of rights of Roman citizenship. The whole Mediterranean was an area of peace and free trade, and there was great movement by sea and river and, to a less extent, by road of foodstuffs and essential manufactures such as textiles, pottery and metalware, of articles of luxury, of industrial processes and commercial capital, of merchants, artisans, public servants and men of leisure.

To a marked degree this empire fulfilled the Stoic ideal of a society covering the inhabited, or at least the civilized, world (*oikumene*) and recognizing no distinction between "Greek and barbarian"—a cosmopolitan brotherhood ruled by a philosopher-king. The "Good Emperors" were inspired by this ideal, and, for the moment, there was a sort of constitutionalism based on the choice of the best-fitted citizen as the successor through his adoption by the reigning emperor. The philosopher-king, Marcus Aurelius, gave immortal expression to the Stoic precepts in his *Meditations*. The literary genius of the century embraced also such dissimilar authors as the historian Tacitus and the moralist Plutarch, Lucian the satirist, and the novelist Apuleius. The popularity of rhetorical prose throughout the empire was a fruit of

the spread of Latin and Greek education. Characteristic of activity in the arts was the extensive building. This showed originality and vigor, even though it tended toward the grandiose, reflecting the opulence and material success that won the applause of the city population.

Military considerations seemed pushed into the background. The luster of Roman arms was, however, not yet dimmed. The policy of defensive frontiers inherited from Augustus was not one of military exhaustion, as Trajan (97-117) showed in the conquest and organization of Dacia beyond the Danube and in his campaigns against the Parthians. Even the philosopher Marcus Aurelius spent much of his reign (161-180) in camp and on the march sharing the hardships of the successful defense against the Marcomanni.

#### MILITARY ANARCHY

The prosperity of the second century is thrown in high relief by the dismal scene of the third. In the century from the accession of Commodus (180 A.D.), the son of Marcus Aurelius, to that of Diocletian (284 A.D.) more than thirty men held the title of emperor. Tyranny and weakness marked the reigns of many of them, and the succession to the throne was almost continually in question. Cruelty, conspiracy and military revolt had appeared in the first century of the empire under the rule of the Julian and Flavian houses, and dark pictures of excesses of this epoch have been left us by Tacitus and Suetonius. Only in the struggle for the throne on the death of Nero in 69, however, did the disorder or scandals reach beyond the court and Rome. The provinces

were on the whole peaceful and well governed. The keynote of the third century was the steady practice of what had been an exceptional discovery in the year 69—the creation of emperors by the legions stationed on the frontiers. There was a reversion to the anarchy of the first century B.C., the last century of the republic, when generals of the armies of Spain, Africa, Gaul and the East had fought for the control of the state in wars that spared few Mediterranean lands. From the assassination of Commodus, civil war and military rule returned. The devastations, the insecurity of person and property, and the arbitrary régime of soldiers from which Augustus and the principate had given a welcome relief were renewed and now destroyed the principate as they had before destroyed the republic.

The ideal of Augustus had been not only peace within the empire but also the stability and defensive character of the frontiers. He abandoned the attempt to advance the boundary to the Elbe after the defeat of Varus by the Germans in the Teutoberg Forest in 9 A.D., preferring to sacrifice on the altar of “Augustan Peace” and to close the doors of the temple of Janus, the god of war. Thereby he could husband the resources of the prince’s treasury and of the empire and reduce the size and importance of the army. This policy was renewed by Hadrian after the campaigns of Trajan. The dangers on the frontiers recurred, however, after each period of quiet, and the long-drawn-out wars of Marcus Aurelius gave fresh importance to the troops. This was accentuated by the attitude of indulgence adopted by the weak Commodus. On his death (192 A.D.) the throne was

seized by an able soldier, Septimius Severus, who increased the number of legions, stationed one in Italy and established frank military despotism. This was a model for most of his successors; but, with few exceptions, they were not able to control, as he did for almost two decades, the anarchic and rapacious spirit of the soldiery. The imperial title became the object and instrument of the cupidity of generals and armies. Civil wars gave opportunities for the plunder of rich cities, such as that of Lyons by the victorious soldiers of Septimius, and for exactions from peasants and landowners. The increase of pay and gifts to the soldiers and the expense of constant strife put an intolerable burden upon the treasury, which had been emptied by Commodus, and the remedies were heavier taxes arbitrarily levied and the debasement of the coinage. Military rule at best has little concern for civilian rights and constitutional forms. For many years of the third century it did not even ensure order, and on the contrary meant insecurity, brutality and destruction.

How was it that Romans suffered these things at the hands of Romans? It was due, in part at least, to the fact that the army was no longer truly Roman. Much of the changing character of Rome republican and imperial was embodied in its soldiery. To the aristocratic and peasant state of the early centuries of expansion belonged the citizen, land-owning soldier. To the strife-ridden, imperialistic later republic belonged the soldier recruited from the city mob (or, by Caesar, from provincials too) and eager for booty, land and the triumph of his commander. Augustus sought to restore discipline

and loyalty to the state by creating a standing army of legions and auxiliary troops and by re-emphasizing the citizenship of the legionaries, whose Italian and urban character was strengthened by drawing the officers from the middle and upper classes. This army was stationed in the provinces and largely on the frontier, and under the defensive policy its operations became more restricted and gradually assumed the character of mounting guard. In these conditions the army ceased to be attractive as a career for men of cities which were enjoying the peace and prosperity of the principate, and it became steadily more provincial in composition, being drawn from the ruder peoples of the less Romanized provinces. This was the rôle of the interior of Spain even in the first century, and the utility of military service as a means of Romanization was well illustrated there. But as cities and civilization spread, the recruiting withdrew to more isolated mountain tribes and to barbarians on the borders. The favorite soldiers of Septimius Severus, whom he introduced into the praetorian guard at Rome, were Illyrians. Such soldiers were not prevented by military discipline from remaining essentially uncivilized and from acting for their own gain rather than out of loyalty to, or understanding of, the political and cultural tradition of Rome.

Foreign wars and invasions added to the confusion and devastation. The revival of Persia under the Sassanid dynasty (226) created a menace to the eastern provinces that culminated, in the middle of the century, in the capture of Antioch and of an emperor. The Black Sea

and the Aegean were raided by Goths, and the Balkans and Gaul were invaded by this and other Germanic peoples. There had been serious assaults upon the frontiers in the second century, but never had these swept over the barriers as in the third. The distraction and waste of civil warfare were in part responsible for the situation. Cupidity and lack of discipline weakened the army. The garrison life of frontier camps had sapped its vigor and military spirit and had lessened its freedom of movement. It was no longer effective against invasions that were not mere border raids. This was apparent as early as the reign of Marcus Aurelius.

The Augustan policy of peace and defensive frontiers was intended to give the empire civilian rule and security from the disorder and arbitrariness of militarism, and in this it at first succeeded. It rid the state, however, neither of the army nor of the need for one, and the army became so changed in personnel, in spirit, and in mobility that the internal and external security gained by the principate was destroyed. Yet Augustus cannot justly be reproached because his measures failed to attain a lasting solution of the problem and on the contrary even contributed to the dangerous change in the army. The contrast of two centuries of the principate with the republican civil wars was no mean achievement. Before we should conclude that a frank and vigorous militarism would have given sounder government and in the long run greater protection, we must turn to study the military despotism that emerged from the strife of the third century.



## MILITARY DESPOTISM

The perils of the frontiers brought to the fore able commanders and created efficient, mobile armies. These restored the security of the eastern border and of the Balkans, though with the loss of Dacia, and reimposed peace and unity upon the far western provinces. Aurelian held the whole empire briefly in 275, and in 284 Diocletian began the reign of twenty-two years in which the empire was reorganized. The work was continued by Constantine, and at his death in 337 he left the absolute and Christian state which ruled the West until the triumph of the Germans and became in the East the Byzantine Empire. The empire was saved, but the principate was destroyed. To preserve the one, autocracy based on soldiery supplanted the constitutional principles of the other. The aim of Diocletian and Constantine was not to restore the state of the Antonines but to give coherence and stability to the military authority which had made itself master in the anarchy of the third century. Hence, in their reform of the army, they recognized on the one hand the fixity of the frontier forces as defensive garrisons drawing food-supplies and recruits chiefly from the neighborhood of the posts. Lands close by were granted to veterans, and their sons were recruited into the service. On the other hand, the need for mobile troops was satisfied by reserve-armies stationed at strategic points in the interior and provided with corps of cavalry. These armies became the keys to the defense of the empire and to its mastery. At the same time the cities, the centers of civilian rule, were becoming thick-

walled strongholds, shrunk to a small fraction of their former size.

Military force could not give the air of established authority to the usurping emperors. Monarchy needed further sanctions to assure it stability and continuity. Despotism did not, to this end, restore the popular and constitutional aspect of the principate but hedged the monarch about with divinity and a ceremonial court. Like the king of Persia, he was removed from his subjects as if he were a god and surrounded by a complex etiquette and a splendid pomp calculated to inspire awe for the person of majesty. Formalism and pageantry were a sheath for the naked sword and transformed generals into sovereigns. Diocletian followed the example of some of the more despotic among his predecessors in identifying himself with a god—a claim of divine incarnation that was in contradiction to the spirit of the principate. For Augustus and most of the early emperors, no more was claimed than that they were men exalted to divinity in virtue of their office and of their real or supposed benefactions to mankind. Now gods assumed the shapes of kings as in Egypt of the Pharaohs. Jupiter was incarnate in Diocletian. Even Constantine, the champion of Christianity, tolerated some worship of himself, but his policy meant the substitution of a Christian state-church and a sort of divine right of kings for personal divinity. The emperor was addressed as *Dominus* (Lord), and he wore the diadem of eastern kings. His person was sacred and was represented with the *nimbus* of the saint. His court was not less Oriental for being Christian. It was a great household, completed by his successors with

a complicated hierarchy of functionaries and titled nobility, whose rank depended upon proximity to the sovereign in personal services as in military and administrative duties. The responsibility of high officials at the court and of chief generals to the person of the ruler was reflected in the use of the word "companion" (*comes*, or count) as an official title, a usage anticipated by Septimius Severus a century earlier. Dwelling apart in a special quarter of Constantinople, his new capital, and surrounded by public and private servants and a palace-corps of army officers, Constantine was not only the first Christian emperor but the founder of the despotic Byzantine Empire. With personal absolutism went the ambition to found a dynasty. Diocletian had sought to give security of succession, as well as to enlist the co-operation of other generals, by dividing the rule between two Augusti and two Caesars, the last of lesser rank and the destined successors of the former. Constantine kept such posts in the family and assured the inheritance of his sons, not on the principle of a united realm under the eldest but as the common possession of the dynasty. Dynastic right became a source of the authority of emperors. Ambitious army-commanders continued, nevertheless, to challenge it and to seek for themselves the mystery of majesty and the creation of dynasties.

#### BUREAUCRACY AND TAXATION

The court was the link between the army and the civil administration. Around the emperor were gathered the élite of the soldiery and the officials of the government bureaus, who together formed the aristocracy of the em-

pire. In the hands of these officials was centralized the control of the justice and revenue of the vast state. The presence of an imperial officialdom was not novel. It had been made necessary by the fact of empire, and the lack of it had been a major reason for the failure of the republic to govern the provinces well. Augustus, Claudius and Hadrian, in particular, had contributed to the development of a bureaucratic system. In their time, however, the cities were still active in local government, and the local aristocracies in their senates and magistratures exercised police-power, assessed taxes and provided for public works and entertainment under the supervision of the Roman emperors. The encroachment of the emperor's authority upon the sphere of local self-government was beginning, even under the Antonines, to pass beyond the measure of control required for the judicial protection of Roman citizens, and to interfere with city finance. Mismanagement, extravagance and financial need led to the appointment, with and without request, of *curatores* for individual cities and of *correctores* for whole provinces. The growth of the concern of the central government in local finances was accelerated in the third century by the increased needs of the emperors at the very time that the prosperity of the cities was being upset by civil war, debased currency and arbitrary rule. Extortion of irregular levies and requisition of goods and of labor on the part of soldiers were accompanied by the additional taxes of successive imperial administrations. The number of officials grew as the task of governing and collecting revenues became more arduous, and corruption necessitated the development of a system of spe-

cial agents or spies to parallel the ordinary services. This made the burden upon the subjects and resources of the empire still heavier and the bureaucratic machinery thereby so much the more indispensable.

The reorganization under Diocletian and Constantine systematized and perpetuated the bureaucracy and its exactions. The empire was divided into four prefectures, ruled by praetorian prefects; vicars responsible to them governed the dioceses, which numbered from two to five for each prefecture; the dioceses (as of Italy, Gaul, etc.) in turn were divided into provinces much smaller than the old provinces and numbering over 100 for the whole empire. The provincial governor was thus brought closer to his subjects and his independence was reduced. In furtherance of the policy of bureaucratic efficiency and dependence, Constantine took from the governor his military command. The irregular taxes were reduced to uniformity and universality, in hitherto privileged Italy as in the provinces. Diocletian's system made the burden more certain; but it is very doubtful whether it was made lighter, and official corruption and extortion were not dealt with efficiently. The basic resource of the treasury was an annual tax levied in kind on land according to common and customary units of land and labor, the *jugum* and *caput*, which have been variously interpreted. It is clear that there was an attempt by a census of these units at rude and simple justice, though its adequacy is doubtful. The size of the unit was proportioned roughly to the quality of the soil and the nature of its use (grain, vine, olive or cattle). The amount of labor, slave or peasant, was in some way related to the assessment. The

dependence of the land-tax upon the peasant tenants (*coloni*) was so great that the fiscal interest of the government was a decisive factor in binding them to their farms, as Constantine required by an edict of 332. It was in line with this policy that the responsibility of the estates for recruits for the army came to be commuted to money payments. There were, besides the land tax, a uniform tax in goods upon artisans and shopkeepers, money levies upon the cities ("crown gold"), and requisition of labor, of goods and of means of transportation.

## OCCUPATIONAL STATUS

The effect of the needs of the state and of the pressure of the bureaucracy in transforming the occupations of freemen into hereditary services required by law was well illustrated by the status of the *coloni*. They were made members of a caste tied to the soil. But state compulsion was not limited to them. The development of hereditary service has been noted in the case of the army. The taxation of artisans and merchants tended in the same direction, while certain of them were bound to membership in their guilds on the ground of the public utility of their trades, such as the transport of grain, the baking of bread, the provision of oil, and the fighting of fires for the service of the capitals, Rome and Constantinople. Wealthy shipowners were thus under obligation as well as humble bakers and carpenters. Quasi-military organization and hereditary compulsion became the practice for state service generally. The principle was applied to workers in government factories, to gladiators and actors, to employees of the bureaus. It went higher and struck

even the members of the governing aristocracies of the municipalities. Their responsibility as municipal senators, or *curiales*, for the revenue of their city and of the territory tributary to it, in which lay their private estates, ceased to be a privilege. As instruments of the imperial fiscal system, they were held collectively liable for the amount of the assessment, they had the responsibility for unused lands in the urban territory forced upon them, and the taxes, which it became increasingly difficult to collect from others, became charges upon their own property.

The obligation of propertied men to perform certain costly services for the state was not new. Such services known as liturgies had been characteristic of the Greek city-state with its strong sense of corporate loyalty, as for instance in the provision for dramatic choruses and for the equipment of warships at Athens. In spite of the cities' loss of independence, the practice of private expenditure for games and the distribution of food, for aqueducts and market-places persisted, especially in connection with the holding of office. It was noticeable in the second century A.D. and was due apparently in part to a sense of local duty, re-enforced by the emphasis of Stoic philosophy upon obligations to the world-state, and in part to ambition for official honors and social prestige. These services were voluntary or matters of social convention enforced by public opinion. Into them the later empire introduced the principle of compulsion from above, which the Romans adopted from the practice of compulsory labor customary in the Hellenistic monarchies of the East for transport and other menial tasks.

The liturgy in this form became an instrument for filling burdensome offices of local administration in Egypt even by the end of the first century A.D. In the next century responsibility in person and property for tax-collection, for the expenses of the priesthood and the like, which had been community obligations, was enforced upon individuals, with the result that the well-to-do sought to avoid these ruinous honors and the government to levy upon their possessions for default. The principle was extended later to other parts of the empire and meant by the fourth century the bondage of the curial class. The endeavors of *curiales* to escape by rising into the imperial bureaucracy and aristocracy or by losing their identity in the army or among the *coloni* were met with strict prohibitions and drastic penalties for abandoning their class or even leaving their native city. Even if they escaped, their property continued under obligation. The very severity of the legislation of the fifth century against this "flight of the *curiales*" shows how great was the anxiety of the municipal aristocracies to escape the oppression of centralized despotism.

## CITIZENSHIP

The city had at last lost its place as center of political loyalty and initiative. Although the ideal of sovereign independence held by the early city-states had been made obsolete by the expansion of Rome in the third and second centuries B.C., local government had retained vitality under the aristocracies. Now the municipalities had become mere administrative units, and their senates and officials the tools of an all-embracing bureaucracy.



Whether a loss of vigor on the part of the cities themselves should be added to bureaucratic aggression as a cause for this will be examined in the next chapter. Here the significant point is the suppression of the remnant of municipal freedom. City men lost the character of active citizens either of their own cities or of Rome and became, like the peasants, subjects of a world-despotism. They were formally Roman citizens and had been so since Caracalla in 212 granted citizenship to all free-men in the empire. They were under the protection of Roman law; but, after the political and social changes and the legislation of the third and following centuries, Roman law was no longer the source of political rights nor even the guaranty of justice. It embodied rather the common obligation of bearing the burdens of the autocracy. This is probably foreshadowed in Caracalla's edict, for, whereas the extension of citizenship to provincials had before him been usually a means of encouraging Romanization and of rewarding municipal and military service, Caracalla may reasonably be suspected of wishing to make universal the incidence of the inheritance tax which the imperial government collected only from Romans.

Whatever were the purposes of the extension of citizenship under the principate, it cost the Italians their priority to the urban populations of the provinces. Gauls, Spaniards and North Africans, Greeks and Syrians, and others were placed on an equality with the ruling people of the Augustan Age, and the position of the citizen was no longer one of peculiar privilege, save in comparison with the slaves and the unfree peasants. Even the im-

portance of this distinction, like that of the aristocratic character of the *curiales*, was disappearing with the growth of hereditary status for the support of the empire and of the new privileged class (the *potentiores*) which had appeared. It was in keeping with the displacement of the constitutional, republican idea by autocracy that citizenship was supplanted as the source of distinctive political advantage by the service and favor of the emperor. The fruits of office, of imperial generosity and of the exploitation of the tenants of great imperial and private estates were for the members of the upper bureaucracy, the higher officers of the army, the senatorial aristocracy of old Rome and court aristocracy of new Rome. They alone could gain exemption from taxation and liturgies and from the checks upon personal freedom. Some of them were the owners of the vast landed properties which were developing outside the jurisdiction of the cities. From the time of Constantine, the Christian clergy too was a privileged class.

## ROMAN LAW

The meaning of the universal equality of citizenship was therefore not equality of privilege in the state but subjection to one law. The resultant universality of the Roman law was one of the most significant contributions of the empire to medieval and modern Europe. Behind the Middle Ages lay one empire, one citizenship, and one law remembered as ideals, and the law was more than an ideal. By its persistence in practice and in codes, it transmitted an inheritance of principle and procedure. This Roman law was not the simple, harsh jus-

tice of the Twelve Tables of the early Latin city. With the extension of Roman jurisdiction and citizenship the content of the law had been modified and expanded through the edicts of the praetors of the republic in Italy and of the provincial governors and then through the advisory decisions of the imperial jurisconsults and the legislation of the emperors. Thus the Roman law had assimilated much of the commercial law which the Greek world had developed and in general had tended to adopt principles that were in keeping with the higher civilization of the empire and that were common to the laws of the myriad of cities with which Roman administrators had to deal. This development was in accord with the doctrine of the Stoics, who sought the "natural law," or the criterion of universal justice for a brotherhood of men, in the elements common to the laws of "nations" (*ius gentium*) and who wished thereby to temper the severity and inequality of the law of the state (*ius civile*). Stoicism was influential in the trend of legislation and jurisprudence of the second and third centuries, and thereafter Christianity came to the support of the humanitarian tendency.

Yet the corollary of expansion was a decline in freedom, as has been noted in the discussion of the rights of citizens. At the same time that legal principles became broader and more humane, the political liberalism and constitutionalism of the law of the republican city-state were yielding to autocracy and bureaucracy. The monarch became the sole source of justice, with no effective limitation upon his power to make law nor upon that of his officials to apply it. The Oriental relation of king

and subject crept in to nullify the concept of ultimate sovereignty situated in the body of citizens. Alongside of the fictions of the consent (and hence, in a sense, participation) of the citizens, of the voice of the people as the voice of God, and of the safety of the people as the supreme law of the state, grew up the actuality of majesty as the embodiment of the state and of its law by the will of God. It is perhaps not without significance that in the third century the most important school of Roman law was at Berytus in Syria and that Papinian and Ulpian, the greatest of the third century jurists, were Syrians. Moreover the shape in which the vast and complex materials were crystallized for the use of the imperial servants and, unwittingly, of later ages was due to the autocracy. The Theodosian code was promulgated by Theodosius II and Valentinian III, emperors of the East and West, shortly before the middle of the fifth century, and the great *Corpus Juris Civilis* was the work of the jurists of Justinian a century later.

The *Corpus*, though it became the source of Roman law in western Europe in the later Middle Ages and in modern times, was not universal in force at the time of its promulgation. It was primarily Byzantine, being one of the structural elements of the Eastern Roman, or Byzantine, Empire which Justinian reared on the foundations laid by Diocletian and Constantine. In spite of his attempts to include the West, which had been conquered by the Germans, Justinian's code, like his armies and administration, gained no lasting hold there except in parts of Italy. In the East, however, imperial law and

bureaucratic and military despotism were maintained for centuries to come.

#### BYZANTINE STRENGTH

The shift of the seat of empire made by Constantine from Rome to Byzantium, renamed Constantinople, had foreshadowed both the separation of the halves of the Mediterranean and the superiority of the capital on the Bosphorus for survival in the face of the forces of disintegration represented by the weakness of the cities under the strain of imperial finance and by the coming of the Germans. The strength of the eastern empire lay not primarily in the peninsula of Greece nor in the Balkans but in Egypt, Syria, and Asia Minor, generally known today as Anatolia. In this Graeco-Oriental realm, autocratic majesty had long been at home and bureaucracy had originated. Imperial institutions were here more deeply rooted, despotism and subjection had more foundation in experience than in the West. Here too the industrial techniques and the practices of commerce were native; indeed it was the people of the Levant who had spread these westward. The manner of life of the subject peasantry had changed little since the beginnings of civilized society. Although the eastern provinces were not spared military anarchy, misgovernment and invasion, the empire did not succumb. The reorganization of Diocletian and Constantine, renewed by Justinian, was not undone. The principate of Augustus and the Antonines was gone as irretrievably as in the West, and the financial régime remained essentially one of exploitation and corruption; but the state retained a high degree

of consistency and vigor in Asia Minor and Constantinople. Its instability in discontented Egypt and Syria was made evident, however, in the seventh century by the ease with which the Arabs swept over these provinces.

The Arab conquest suggests that a vital factor in the contrast of the East and West in the fifth and sixth centuries was their relative accessibility to the Germans. The Danube was, to be sure, the first frontier to be broken beyond repair, when the Visigoths, after being permitted to enter the empire in 376 in order to escape the pressure of the Huns, turned their arms against the emperor. The destruction of a Roman army at Adrianople in 378 inaugurated barbarian domination of the Balkans, successively ravaged by Visigoths, Huns, Ostrogoths, and Gepidi in the course of the following century, and these peoples were a constant menace to Constantinople. The threat was not so serious, however, as the proximity of the eastern capital to the Danube would seem to indicate. The Germans found, as did the Russians in the nineteenth century, that, although they might influence the policy of the city, they could not capture it nor long control it. Impregnable against attack by land, it proved by its position upon the straits to be an Asiatic rather than a European city as long as these were held. It depended, and still does depend, for its resources not upon the Balkans and Greece but upon Asia Minor, and in the fifth century upon Syria and Egypt as well. From Asiatic and African provinces came food and textiles, ships and arms. Even for soldiers Constantinople could be independent of the neighboring European provinces, in spite of her use of Thracians and

Balkan mountaineers. From the mountains of Asia Minor came such hardy fighters as the Isaurians, who in the last of the fifth century were drawn upon to counterbalance the authority of the Germans in the armies of the East. Important as was the part of Theodoric the Ostrogoth and other barbarian commanders in the politics of Constantinople, the government never became utterly dependent upon them. In the reign of Justinian, the eastern empire passed from the defensive to the offensive, and the German danger was over. Before the end of the sixth century it was replaced by the threat of the Slavs and Avars, who soon overran the Balkans.

#### GERMAN CONQUEST OF THE WEST

While important provinces of the East were shielded from the barbarians by the sea and the strategic situation of Constantinople, the West lay open to invasion along the long frontier of the upper Danube and the Rhine, and there was no key position for its defense. The transfer of the headquarters of the emperor in Italy to Milan, as early as the close of the third century, reflected the need of ready communication through the passes of the Alps with the Danubian and Rhenish fronts, but neither of these could be defended after the opening of the fifth century. The upper Danube gave ready access to Italy, for slight protection was afforded by passes that by easy ascent brought invaders to the head of the eastern and northern slopes of the rich plain of the Po. The lure of Italy and Rome was increased by the weakness of the emperors, who withdrew to Ravenna and left barbarian officers in command of the empire and of its defense, and

by the strength and diplomacy of Constantinople, which induced invaders to move from the Balkans westward. The first people thus to invade Italy and to capture Rome (410) were the Visigoths, the victors of Adrianople, who after the death of their leader Alaric wandered on westward to southern Gaul and to Spain. Meanwhile the pressure of the Franks, Alemanni, and Burgundians became irresistible on the Rhine and gradually spread their power over northern and eastern Gaul. Through this frontier broke also the more mobile Alans, Suevi and Vandals, who passed on to the conquest of Spain and of Africa, whence the Vandals became the scourge of the western Mediterranean and in 455 sacked Rome. Saxon raids on the north coasts developed into the conquest of Britain. The provinces of the Danube above the Balkan mountains, after the Visigothic migration westward, fell into the hands of the Ostrogoths, Gepidi and Marcomanni (later the Bavarians). It was from the Danube valley that the Huns, who held temporary sway there in the middle of the fifth century, threatened to conquer Gaul and Italy.

The barbarian tribes were set in motion in the last of the fourth century by obscure movements of nomadic peoples of the grassy and arid plains and plateaus of Asia, as illustrated by the pressure of the Huns into the lands of the Germans. What caused the initial movements is unknown. The suggestion that these and other invasions of civilized lands before and since were due to steadily diminishing rainfall or to the cyclic recurrence of long periods of drought is attractive but rests on insufficient evidence, as does also the theory that the Chi-



nese Great Wall turned nomadic horsemen westward. Probably chance political combinations on the steppes (perhaps stimulated by conflict over pasture-lands and oases in seasons of unusual drought) led to the Hunnish conquests and Gothic migrations. Restlessness on the part of the Germans attracted by the wealth of the Roman world, even without apparent compulsion from Asia, was, however, already old before the battle of Adrianople. From the invasion of Italy by the Cimbri and Teutons in the first century B.C. to the last successful defense of the Rhine frontier by Julian (later, emperor and known as the Apostate) in the middle of the fourth century A.D., the Germans had returned to the attack again and again.

Time was on the side of the barbarians by remedying their inferiority. The onslaught increased in intensity as the Germans adopted defensive armor, improved their weapons after the Roman example and brought into action the cavalry of the eastern plains, while the morale of the imperial army declined. Rome became increasingly dependent upon Germans as soldiers, and they were introduced into high commands and into the court as early as the time of Constantine. Germanization from within kept pace especially in the West with the rising pressure from without. While barbarian tribesmen after Adrianople occupied the western provinces, others as mercenaries were defending Italy under German *magistri militum*—Stilicho, the bulwark against the Visigoths before 410, and Ricimer, maker of emperors and enemy of the Vandals a half century later. Adrianople as the victory of the Gothic and Alan mailed horse-lancers was de-

cisive also in assuring the growing preponderance of the cavalry in the Roman army. To the barbarian lancers were later added mounted archers on the model of the Huns. The armored horsemen of the Byzantine Empire and of the medieval west, like the much older Persian cavalry, were developed from such sources. Light-armed footmen using the bow or the javelin replaced the legionary infantry, which lingered longest in Gaul where it faced the foot-soldiery of the Franks.

German defense against Germans was furthered and the disintegration of the western empire hastened by making bands and tribes of barbarians *foederati*, or allies. This conversion of enemies into friends was effected in the western provinces by the grant of lands to tribes, either to form frontier barriers as in the first concessions on the Rhine to the Franks and the Burgundians or to give legal sanction to conquest as in the case of the Visigoths. Their chieftains were kings without denying the titular authority of the emperor. In fact the Germans were mostly bent not on supplanting the empire but on participating in its advantages. They were grouped in clans and warrior bands and tribes unattached to definite territories and not organized into territorial states with administrative systems like those of the empire and of the states of modern Europe. Hence they could penetrate the empire, occupy its lands, and found kingdoms without at once destroying the shell of the empire.

#### THE GERMAN KINGDOMS

The events in Italy in 476, which are generally known as the Fall of the Western Empire, illustrate this process.

It was the work of Odoacer, an officer in the barbarian "Roman" army, to bring the situation there in line with that in the Germanic kingdoms in Gaul, Spain, and Africa. He displaced Orestes, the dictator, and Orestes' son, Romulus, nicknamed Augustulus, the puppet emperor of the West, by granting the Germanic soldiery what Orestes had refused, a third of the lands of Italy. This was in keeping with the precedents set in Gaul in the case of "federated" tribes, and it was logical that Odoacer imitated the authority of their chieftains by assuming the title of king over his German troops. He emphasized his independence by not recalling the emperor whom Orestes had displaced (Julius Nepos) and by not naming a puppet of his own, thereby avoiding the embarrassment of an emperor as a rival in Italy. Instead he turned to the emperor at Constantinople and obtained the title of Patrician, implying mutual recognition as sovereign and viceroy respectively. For Odoacer the empire was still a reality. His conduct was based upon the theory of the unity of the empire. It was one state, which had had two rulers but now once more only one. Like other Germanic leaders he respected the imperial tradition and sought to profit by it as its representative, in spite of his dependence on barbarian troops. The same attitude was assumed by his successor, Theodoric the Ostrogoth, who even held a commission from the emperor at Constantinople for the invasion of Italy and the destruction of Odoacer. Jealousy of the independence displayed by the Patrician and desire to get the Ostrogoths out of the Balkans led the emperor to encourage one German to supplant another as viceroy

of Italy. This meant, however, fresh progress along the path trod by Odoacer. Theodoric was not simply general and king of German mercenaries of the Roman army of Italy, but king of the Ostrogothic people, warrior bands that were at the same time auxiliaries of Rome and conquerors of her lands (493). The result was a Germanic kingdom that for half a century held a leading place among the kingdoms established by Germanic peoples in the western provinces. The other kingdoms in the early years of the sixth century were those of the Vandals in Africa (with the capital at Carthage and with control of Sardinia and other islands), the Visigoths in Spain, and the Franks, who in these very years were uniting Gaul and the Rhineland under Clovis by the defeat of the Alemanni, the Burgundians and the Visigoths, and with whom lay the future.

That the result of German penetration had been the erection of independent states in which the authority of the empire was scarcely any longer even a fiction was made clear by the attempt of Justinian in the second quarter of the century to reconquer the West. He destroyed the Vandal kingdom and that of the Ostrogoths, and seized southeastern Spain from the Visigoths, so that the Roman world (except for the rest of Spain) was divided between Byzantine and Frank. This outcome merely emphasized the separation of the East and West, especially since the hold of Constantinople upon Italy and Spain was precarious. Justinian's conquest was almost fatal to Rome. Palaces and public buildings were ruined and most of the population scattered. Senate and consuls disappeared. The games and the imperial dole

of grain were no more. The city which had created the empire was, in practice if not in theory, abandoned to the papacy. Most of Italy was easy prey for fresh Germanic invaders, the Lombards, who overran it immediately after the death of Justinian (565). Only in the region of Ravenna and in the south did imperial authority continue. The reconquest of Spain did not last twenty years save on the coast, which was held for a half century longer. Africa alone was secure from the Germans, but it was lost to the Arabs at the end of the seventh century.

#### DECLINE OF CENTRAL AUTHORITY

The separation of the West from the East and its division into Germanic kingdoms formed only the more obvious phase of a far-reaching process of decentralization that undermined the power of the emperors and then of the German kings and prepared the way for feudalism, the distinctive form of political life in medieval Europe. The disruption of centralized administration and the decline of loyalty to the empire, though brought to a climax in the West by the invasions, originated in the arbitrary government and the debasement of the municipal system that attended the rise of bureaucracy and despotism. These furthered rather than prevented the decay of public spirit among the *curiales* and the corruption and oppression on the part of municipal and imperial officials. "Roman citizenship has been brought to nought by extortion," said Salvian, priest of Marseilles, in the fifth century. It "is now voluntarily repudiated and shunned, and is thought not merely valueless, but even almost ab-

horrent." Those who fled to the barbarians and revolted and turned brigands in Gaul and Spain had, he charged, been "compelled to become criminals" by the Romans. This was not the revival of Gallic and Iberian tribal loyalty but the demoralization of imperial authority. Centralization had fostered decentralization by furthering the destruction of civic responsibility.

Contributors to this disintegration and its chief beneficiaries were the great landed aristocracy, the *potentiores*, magnates who through imperial favor and private force and fraud achieved independence of bureaucratic jurisdiction. These were to be found in the East too, notably in Egypt; but the disorder of the period of invasions gave to the owners and managers of large estates in the West the opportunity and the necessity of acting for themselves. With financial and police jurisdiction over their tenants, with unrestricted use of their landed revenues and with bands of military retainers, they became territorial lords. German chieftains gained a similar freedom in the control of the lands which they seized.

Institutional tendencies of the late empire, despotic though it was, were in accord with the rise of authority on the part of a landed aristocracy. The military monarchy, in its struggle with disintegration, depended more and more from the time of Constantine upon the direct loyalty and responsibility of its servants to the person of the emperor. Duty to the state was replaced by personal ties, as illustrated by the position of the monarch's "companions" even in the fourth century. The *beneficium* (or grant of a "benefit") was the form under which functions of office, taxes, land, exemptions and other

privileges were given away with the purpose of rewarding favorites, creating dependents and securing military and civil service. Similar in tendency was the immunity. As an exceptional jurisdiction, it gave great landowners unhampered control of local taxation and justice as internal concerns of their estates. The aggrandizement of the aristocracy was furthered by the fresh growth of the old Roman (and Gallic) practice of patronage and clientship, which afforded the peasants and small landowners protection from the disorders at the cost of their freedom. These practices were the forerunners of feudalism. Responsibilities and powers, conceived as personal and hereditary, were attached to local territories. The union of personal prerogative and territorial jurisdiction meant in the end decentralization of authority.

The German kingdoms, the heirs of the late empire, did not reverse the trend. The importance of clan and tribe accentuated local and personal ties. Law and government were, in tribal practice, based upon what we should consider private relations. The rights and obligations of a German freeman had been those of kinship rather than of citizenship or of subjection to an empire. His law was the unwritten custom of his tribe. The migrations had loosened these early kinship ties but had strengthened the personal element in politics. The great tribal combinations of the fifth and sixth centuries—Visigothic, Burgundian, Frankish and the like—were the creations of movement and war and so too was the German kingship. Based upon military leadership and conquest, this monarchy was despotic in principle and attained autocratic authority in the hands of vigorous

chiefs, such as Clovis of the Franks, who made it a hereditary possession of the Merovingian line, and Charlemagne, who was in 800 crowned Roman emperor. Yet the power of these Frankish kings was only military and individual, symbolized in the mutual obligations of protection and service exchanged between the leader and a group of devoted comrades. This military institution, common to the German and other tribal societies, acquired the Latin name for retinue, *comitatus*, which links it with the more courtly companionship of the empire. Contract between individuals was an even more personal basis of law and authority than kinship. German rulers had the support neither of a uniform system of law nor of an effective revenue and administration nor of a common civic loyalty.

#### THE ROMAN HERITAGE IN THE GERMAN STATES

The new kings found these traits of a settled political order in the late empire, in spite of its growing reliance also upon military power, individual loyalty and aristocratic jurisdiction, which were more in harmony with German political authority. Because of the very tribal and personal character of the institutions of the invaders, which had enabled them to penetrate and to occupy the empire without immediately destroying it, they sought to profit by Roman administration of law and finance. The direct taxes on land and persons and the duties on imports and markets and the like were levied. The *curias* of the municipalities were still used and oppressed. Administrative posts were maintained, and experienced Roman bureaucrats continued to hold many of them.



Roman law and courts served the Roman population. The early German kings sought to keep their Roman subjects distinct from the conquering peoples. Prohibition of intermarriage, reservation of military duty to the Germans, different legal systems and the conflict of the Arianism of the barbarians (except the Franks) with the Roman Church were barriers between the races. Two distinct régimes could not, however, long be carried on together. The superior numbers of the Romans and Romanized provincials, especially in lands close to the Mediterranean, gave weight to imperial law and administration, and these were favored too by the absolutist aspirations of the kings. Races and cultures tended to fuse, and the Arian heresy gave way before the Catholicism of Rome and the Franks, just as German yielded to Romance tongues west and south of the Vosges and the Alps. Fusion of Roman and German political traditions assured some inheritance in the Middle Ages from Roman institutions, but it meant also their further decline as means of effective government. This process completed the disintegration of the principles and practice of the Roman Empire in the West.

The Roman inheritance can be seen in the influence of Roman law. It did not wait upon the study of the Code of Justinian in the law-schools and royal courts of the eleventh century, but appeared in the legislation of German kings of the sixth and seventh centuries. Barbarian law was written down after the example of imperial legislation—as in the edicts of Theodoric for the Ostrogoths, the Salic law of the Franks, Burgundian and Visigothic codes, and the edicts of the Lombard kings.

Theodoric made much use of Roman principles in his legislation, and Visigothic codes illustrate the growth of this practice. A code for Roman subjects was issued at the opening of the sixth century; Visigothic law was next written down; and in the seventh century a code permeated with Roman influence was promulgated for all subjects without distinction. Visigothic law left its traces in the law of medieval Spain, as did that of the Lombards in Italy; but in the evolution of local custom out of the fusion of traditions in these lands and in southern France Roman law was predominant. Its principles were important in the north as well, but the different degree of influence was shown by the fact that northern France in the Middle Ages was the *pays de droit coutumier* (customary law), whereas the south was the *pays de droit écrit* (written law). Thus Roman law became embodied in medieval tradition but ceased to be the uniform law of a great state. It did not prevent the decentralization of politics and was itself localized.

Taxation and other administrative functions were likewise transformed by contact with the military and personal character of Germanic authority. The Lombards and the Franks resisted direct taxes, which the Lombard kings were never able to enforce and which the Merovingians were not strong enough to collect even on lands, to say nothing of persons, after the opening of the seventh century. Indirect imposts, such as tolls on rivers and roads and markets, multiplied, in keeping with the growth of the importance of local authorities, whose perquisites they tended to become. Centralized administration through bureaucracy and *curiales* went to pieces,

leaving local government in the hands of the count as direct representative of the king, with the city as little more than a stronghold. The count was the royal plenipotentiary, with military and civil power, and was bound to the sovereign by friendship and personal loyalty as a member of the royal *comitatus*. Loyalty to the king gave way before the attachment of the interests of the counts to the territories which they governed and from which they drew their revenues. Their posts became hereditary, and they ceased to be subject to the royal will.

This independence was not peculiar to the Frankish counts. In the exercise of sovereignty at the expense of the king they were surpassed by the Lombard dukes (from *dux*, military leader) of the seventh century. The position of these German nobles was matched by that of the officers subordinate to the Byzantine exarch of Ravenna. The defense of imperial frontiers, even close to Ravenna, had to be entrusted to military lords who were granted towns and districts under obligation of resistance to the Lombards. The growth of the independence of local magnates was general and, as we have seen, had begun before the disappearance of the western empire. The result was the acceptance by the German kings of local jurisdiction on the part of landowners as the means of government.

Yet the idea of unity and the spell of Rome remained. The early German leaders had not thought to supplant the Roman state. They sought its recognition in Spain and Gaul as in Italy, posing as its allies and representatives. They struck coins on the imperial model, adopted Roman symbols of authority, and accepted titles con-

ferred by the emperors. After imperial suzerainty became in the sixth century no longer even a fiction, men remembered the universality of the empire. In the localism and strife of the Middle Ages, they clung to the imperial ideal. For them Rome was the center of the world, and they could not believe that the empire had ceased. It was merely transformed, and its supremacy embodied in the Church and in the Holy Roman Empire. The title of emperor, after an eclipse among the successors of Charlemagne, was given fresh vitality in the tenth century by Otto I of the Saxon house. The Saxon duchy and people, upon which this line of German kings based its power, had never been subjected nor civilized by Rome, and the new empire, confined to Germany, Burgundy and Italy, fell far short of the supremacy of western Europe. Its hold, as the heir of Rome, upon the medieval mind makes us realize therefore how strong was the Roman imperial tradition. The unifying force of Rome made France, Germany, England, Spain and Italy parts of a common political system, a single stage for politics in the Middle Ages and in modern times. The deeper reasons for this community lay in the legal and institutional background and in the economic, cultural, and religious inheritance which will be discussed in the following chapters. The prestige of the city of Rome and the idea of Empire were symbols of this common heritage.

## II

### ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHANGE

#### IMPERIAL GOVERNMENT AND ECONOMIC DECLINE

THE prestige of the principate of Augustus and of the Antonines rested upon prosperity as well as upon peace and justice. The success of the upper classes of the cities was evident in the activity of trade and of manufacture, the extension of vine and olive culture and of landed estates, the spread of municipalities and the increase of wealth and luxury. The material resources upon which the cities and their aristocracies depended were essential to the power of the empire. Revenue was a prime concern of the imperial government, as of all governments, and it became increasingly the preoccupation of emperors and bureaucrats from the second century, transforming the administration into a vast tax-collecting machine which reduced citizens to the level of exploited subjects. This was due not only to the increased demands of the military and autocratic state but also to the diminution of the wealth of its subjects. Decay of prosperity accompanied the breakdown of the partnership between the principate and the urban aristocracies.

For the economic decline, the imperial government itself had a large measure of responsibility. The active

production and wide distribution of goods require a certain degree of order and of trust in the relations of men, of sureness in communication, of confidence in currency and taxation, and of assurance against public and private violence. These guaranties the late empire and its Germanic successors failed to supply. Instead, military and bureaucratic policy gravely injured commerce, manufacture and agriculture and oppressively restricted individual freedom. During the disorders of the third century, insecurity of property and of transport due to brigands and pirates, to military requisitions and plunder, and to the neglect of the repair of roads disrupted trade. Irregular taxation and successive debasements of the currency added to the difficulties. Gold disappeared from circulation, and silver coins were so largely made from baser metal that at one time there was less than two per cent of silver used. The growth of the practice of collecting taxes in kind reflected the disorganization of the currency, as did also Diocletian's attempt to prevent the rise of prices by enacting a detailed schedule of maximum rates in a decree of 301. This emperor's reorganization of taxation continued the burden without stamping out official abuses. The sequel was the restriction of occupation and movement which developed something of the rigidity of a caste-system for the local tax-paying aristocracies, the business men and craftsmen and the peasantry. The machinery of collection itself absorbed great revenues for its maintenance. It drained off the wealth of the productive classes at the same time that it strangled their economic activity by destroying the freedom and the security of trade and industry which had been the

boons of the principate. The well-to-do men of the cities, the middle class upon which the prosperity of the empire rested, were caught between the oppressive fiscal régime and insufficient resources and were ruined.

What followed reflected the different courses of the empire in the West and in the East. In the disorder and disintegration consequent upon the German invasions and the disruption of the western empire, the decline of the cities and of trade and industry continued until their almost complete disappearance, save for some remnants of commerce at such ports as Marseilles. This was commerce with the eastern Mediterranean, where the continuance of cities and of commercial and industrial activity was a corollary of the reorganization and persistence of the empire. There under Byzantine and Saracen rule Greek and Syrian business lived on until it served in the Middle Ages to stimulate the fresh development of European commerce.

Economic activity is not however primarily dependent upon government. Of these two aspects of society, the economic appears indeed to be the more fundamental and has so strongly impressed modern historians that some interpret all history in economic terms, reducing politics to a passively subordinate rôle. Though this extreme view is unsatisfactory, the importance of the economic interpretation for the study of the Roman Empire is apparent upon examination of the dependence of ancient cities on economic conditions. They were, as in other advanced economic régimes, the centers of intense, complex human intercourse. They were created by it and in turn created it. In them throve the exchange and

manufacture of necessities and luxuries, and only through them did the products of agriculture and pasturage find markets. In the hands of urban aristocracies, wealth was concentrated—not only money and goods but landed estates. Cities were the foci of the material life of the early principate as of the Greek and Syrian world of earlier centuries. This was the essential counterpart of their rôle as centers of local government.

#### ECONOMY OF THE EMPIRE

Commerce was the primary economic function of the cities and the means of advance in production and wealth. Exchange of products and of ideas was essential to ancient, as to modern, civilization. The world-wide contacts, complex organization and machine equipment of modern business make us apt to underestimate the importance of the simpler relations and instruments of antique trade. It flowed with regularity and in great volume and variety between all coasts of the Mediterranean. By the Guadalquivir, the Danube and other rivers, it penetrated the provinces. By the Rhone it passed out of the Mediterranean basin to the northward-flowing Seine and Rhine. From the river-towns it spread in lessening volume by roads and paths. To the east plied Arab caravans, and over the Indian Ocean Alexandrians kept Rome in touch with India and China for spices and silks. Within the empire trade was not primarily in luxuries. Grain, oil and wine, woolens (coarse as well as fine), pottery (common lamps as well as painted bowls), and metal-ware were among the more important necessities that burdened the small ships. Business was facili-



tated by freedom of trade, by an imperial currency common to all the provinces save Egypt, by banks and loans, shipping-partnerships and letters of credit. The Roman conquest and pacification of the Mediterranean and near-by lands had made possible a great expansion of the operations of Greek and Syrian merchants, while the spread of soldiers and settlers, of traders and merchandise increased steadily the demand for the staple goods of Graeco-Roman civilization.

The manner of the production of these goods showed a like development. Methods of industrial organization which we are inclined to attribute to the influence of modern machinery were in use in the Hellenistic age in Greek and Phoenician cities and spread to the West in the first two centuries of the empire. Concentration of capital and of workers (slaves and freedmen), supervision and division of labor and standardization of product were effected in groups of shops of single ownership and in factories which employed in some cases one or two hundred hands. There was considerable local specialization, furthered by the reputation of brands and by trade secrets, in such centers as Puteoli (near Naples) for metals, Arretium (Arezzo) for pottery, Ephesus and Sidon for textiles. Organization of this sort was confined to the export industries. Trades for local consumption, those of the baker, butcher, and others that would make a more inclusive list than a similar one today, were carried on in small shops by free artisans, freedmen and trusted slaves.

Agriculture, like manufacture, was affected by commercial enterprise and by the growth of wealth. Small

farming was crowded back into the uplands, and peasants displaced or reduced to tenantry by large estates. These produced a marketable surplus by the investment of capital in systematic and large-scale cultivation and in slave labor. Adaptation of crops to the nature of the soil and climate, rotation, drainage, fertilization and skilful care of plants and trees and animals constituted a veritable applied science. Grains, flax and fodder crops flourished on estates, or *latifundia*, from Syria to Spain. The olive, grape and other fruits were grown in extensive orchards, and olive oil and wine prepared on the estates for distant markets. Vast tracts of less fertile and rougher land on the larger *latifundia* were devoted to the pasturage of cattle, sheep and goats. Stewards managed these capitalistic farms for owners who were city men. Cities furnished the capital as well as the markets.

Land was the primary form of invested wealth. Its possession was requisite for prestige in a society in which, as in modern England, the tradition of a landed aristocracy was strong in spite of the rise of trade and industry. The historical importance of the landed class in most city-states was powerfully illustrated in the rôle of the Roman Senate, and Rome was consistent, under the emperors as under the republic, in favoring local landowning aristocracies. Besides, the country estate was then the most easily and securely handled and transmitted form of investment for profits set aside from the working capital of a business. The successful merchant and manufacturer put funds into land in order to assure himself and his children an income and social position.

Just as the Roman senators and the members of the equestrian, or official, class invested in *latifundia* throughout the empire, so the rich of each city were the land-owners of the "territory" subject to the administration of this city. Capitalistic farming was a primary source of the income of these upper classes. They commanded directly the produce of grain-lands, orchards and pastures. Wheat, wine, olive oil, wool and the like passed through the city marts on their way to consumers near and far. Municipal revenues for local and imperial purposes were drawn largely from these estates. The ancient cities stood therefore in an unusually intimate relation to their immediate countryside. Agriculture shared with commerce and industry in contributing essentially to the prosperity of the possessing and governing classes of the principate.

#### MEANS OF TRANSPORT AND PRODUCTION

This activity and organization in economic life was achieved with simple instruments. Paved highways were the arteries of land communication, crossing mountain barriers, such as the Alps, at several points and spreading to the confines of all the provinces. Along them passed the post-horses of messengers, the carriages of officials, freighted carts and marching armies. Local roads were unsurfaced—a condition prevailing even on main routes, however, in medieval and modern times until the nineteenth century. Transport by land for any considerable distance was at best slow and costly, and merchandise moved largely by water in river barges and sailing ships of small burden. Mariners were without the

compass, and, though the light-house was known, as that of Pharos at Alexandria shows, navigation was by sun and stars and by knowledge of the coasts, in which experience was supplemented by charts and itineraries. Important harbors, like those of Alexandria and Puteoli, were improved by moles and docks and warehouses. The Hellenistic and Roman skill in engineering exhibited in public works, such as roads, harbors, aqueducts, sewers and buildings, was applied to agriculture in irrigation and drainage. The high technique of cultivation of field and orchard, moreover, was comparable to that of Europe in the nineteenth century, and alongside of it should be put the industrial chemistry of specialized processes and tools developed in the manufacture of pottery, textiles and metal-ware. Production in field and in shop was, however, primitive in its means as compared with ours and scarcely got beyond the use of the tool. Simple machines were used to multiply the power of man and beast by the lever, wheel and axle, pulleys and the screw. Water-power was harnessed for mills, as well as for organs and clocks, and liquids were raised by the siphon and the force-pump. Yet the tool wielded by the hand remained the prime means of manufacture. The power of invention and adaptation was not lacking in practical science, and great advances were made by Greek theoretical science in working out the principles of mechanics. Scientists made use of observation and experiment and applied their knowledge of the forces which they studied in ingenious contrivances, such as those of Hero of Alexandria. But these remained playthings, for the

most part. Machine production was reserved for the modern world.

The advance of mechanical and chemical technique is slowly won, and so too is the development of a body of scientific principles and methods. These are cumulative processes and act and react upon each other, stimulating further growth. Ancient science and practice made remarkable beginnings, which formed the starting-point for the later advances of the Saracens and Europeans. The shortcomings of classical technology and scientific thought appear not so much in what they did or did not accomplish by the time of the principate as in their failure to continue to go ahead. How far this was due to some inherent weakness of classical science, such as the isolation of theory from practice, and how far it was due to a general decline of intellectual activity will be discussed in the next chapter. On the side of practice and of economics the factor that has direct bearing on the problem is the dependence on slave-labor. Through the use of slaves production for export to expanding markets and on a scale larger than the peasant farm and the artisan shop was possible without machinery. The increase of the numbers of servile farm and factory "hands" was an essential part of the expansion of agriculture and industry and commerce. Investment that would today be in labor-saving machines was then in slaves as tools. It would be rash, though, to adopt a single simple formula of the plentifulness of labor as the explanation of the contrast between the techniques of ancient and modern production.

## DECLINE OF SLAVERY

Slave-labor proved not to be an inexhaustible resource of Roman planters and manufacturers. The supply in ancient times came primarily as the spoils of warfare, and the rise of slavery in the West was connected with the vast numbers of captives thrown on the market during the Roman Republic's wars of conquest. The Augustan policy of peace and stable frontiers largely dried up this source, and private slave-catching beyond the borders was an inadequate substitute. The barbarians captured in the campaigns in Britain and Dacia and in the conflicts with the Germans after the middle of the second century had neither the civilized skill nor the amenability to direction and settled life which Mediterranean peoples had and which were required especially for the crafts and for specialized agriculture. Their use in gangs for unskilled tasks on *latifundia* and in mines did not solve the problem of slave-supply, nor did the alternative inaugurated by Marcus Aurelius in settling them on waste lands as servile tenants (*inquilini*). The higher and more creative elements of Roman slavery in particular were left without sources of fresh recruits.

With our modern humanitarian hostility to slavery on grounds of individual liberty and social equality, we find it hard to conceive of slavery as other than economically unproductive and morally degrading. Yet much of ancient slavery can not be so harshly judged. The prosperity of scientific farming and capitalistic manufacturing and commerce in the Roman Empire depended upon skilled and semi-skilled workers—vine-dressers, garden-

ers, stewards, craftsmen, clerks, shop-keepers, business agents and others. A large proportion of these, as well as many teachers, actors and artists, were slaves or ex-slaves. It was especially among slaves of this skill and standing that numbers declined, for manumission was a common practice, in spite of a low birth-rate and of the difficulty of filling the gaps. Manumission was firmly grounded in law and custom, appealing to the generous owner as a way of rewarding faithful service, to the ambitious and vain master as a means of enlarging with freedmen his retinue of clients at the courts and at the baths and at his funeral procession, and to the calculating master as an incentive to good service and a means of realizing in cash on the capital invested in a slave. The purchase of freedom by the private property which slaves were permitted by custom to accumulate was a regular practice. The advantage to the master was often increased by his retention, as patron, of the right to the service of the freedman and to the inheritance of the latter's property. The opportunities for emancipation in these various ways were chiefly open to skilled and trusted servants and illustrate how favorable was the position of the better-class slaves in spite of arbitrary masters, rapacious and negligent stewards, slave-prisons, and the degraded condition of unskilled laborers.

The effects of the exhaustion of the slave-supply were evident in the second and third centuries. Free men, many of whom were freedmen and their descendants, were taking the place of slaves on the farms and in the shops. This was not as hired labor in large shops and in *latifundia*, but as independent artisans working on a

small scale and as tenants on small farm-plots. The social and legal status of the workers was improved at the same time that the scale and efficiency of production were reduced. The free craftsman and the peasant farmer had outlived capitalistic concentration; and their return to importance was accompanied by the deterioration of industry and agriculture, judged by quality and quantity of output. Slavery continued during the empire, especially for household service, and bondsmen who were chattels rather than soil-bound serfs existed in the Middle Ages; but the rôle was distinctly secondary. It was the decay of slavery and not its prosperity that paralleled the decline of the economic activity of the principate. If slaves are to be held responsible for this decline, it should be on the ground that too great reliance was placed upon a form of labor that was not sufficiently recruited in the Augustan peace. The importance of manumission for the morale and effectiveness of ancient slave-labor suggests, however, that there was a weakness in slavery as a productive force—a weakness whose remedy diminished the slave-supply.

#### DECLINE AND LOCALIZATION OF MARKETS

The number of slaves does not tell the whole story. Capitalist manufacture for export developed in Europe at the close of the Middle Ages without the aid of either slaves or machines. We must take into account other changes of the second and third centuries that were unfavorable to systematized production on *latifundia* and in concentrated shops. Markets, which were as important for specialization in production as was an organized



labor-system, also began to fail. This was evident in lessened commercial activity and may be partly attributed to difficulties in the means of communication and exchange. The political handicaps, which have been dealt with, were very important. Other and more dubious explanations have been suggested.

The disorganization of the currency and the collection of taxes and payment of governmental servants in kind would, according to one theory, be explained as due not to mere debasement of the coinage but to a steady decrease in the supply of silver and gold resulting from a drain of metals in payments for imports from India and the failure of declining mines to make good the losses. Neither gold nor silver, the more important metal for ancient coinage, was, however, used in great enough amount in this commerce to explain the disorder of the currency in the third century. Diocletian's edict fixing maximum prices reflected rather a condition of depreciated currency and high prices than a scarcity of metals, which would have meant low prices. The general lessening of economic activity and of political security and perhaps also the exhaustion of readily available ore seem to have reduced the production of fresh metals; but a serious shortage of metals for the service of a diminishing trade could not result, unless from a heavy drain upon existing supplies, which has not been demonstrated. Diocletian and Constantine reformed the currency by minting sound silver and gold coins, and this may have drawn back into circulation metals driven out by debasement. In any case, money regained a considerable degree of importance in exchange.

A less questionable hypothesis has been put forward that the simple means of transport were inadequate for maintaining the political and economic unity of a state of over one and a quarter million square miles and of fifty to sixty million people, that is, of between a third and a half of the land area and population of the United States and, due to the Mediterranean, of approximately its full length and breadth. Modern communication must not lead us to judge Roman conditions too unfavorably, for the Romans were able to create an extensive political, economic and cultural community in a region that has since then been disunited for fifteen hundred years. Ancient transportation did not, on the other hand, forestall disintegration. Commerce did not resist successfully the growth of provincial production for local consumption at the expense of older centers.

It might seem, according to our standards of transportation, that commerce was not equipped for such resistance. Yet it was trade and communication which developed this competition as well as markets. Not products alone were carried but also the means of making them. The simplicity of these means in comparison with the machinery of today, and the reliance upon the manual worker who could migrate, taking his technical skill with him, made the spread of production follow closely on the spread of commerce. Modern communication, machine technique and vast complex organization of industry have not, however, prevented a similar tendency; perhaps they have instead encouraged it. Manufacture has spread from Great Britain to Germany and America and is now expanding to Russia, to the Orient and to

other primarily agricultural regions, and the future has still to learn whether amid the variety of modern industrial production specialization and local advantages will save for the older centers some portion of the world market. In the Roman Empire such good fortune did attend the Syrian and Greek manufacturers of glass-ware and pottery, metal-ware, textiles and the like on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean, where these crafts had been at home for more than a thousand years before the Christian era. The distinction between ancient and modern means of communication does not solve the problem of economic decentralization.

The spread of crafts and of the olive tree and the vine had been from the first a corollary of the spread of ancient civilization. They had come west with the rise of the Greeks of Sicily and South Italy, of Carthage and of the Etruscans before the expansion of Rome. Her conquests extended them beyond the few Greek and Phoenician coastal cities far into Spain, Gaul and North Africa. Just as Attic common pottery and olive oil had once filled the markets of Italy and then lost them to Campania and Etruria, so these Italian centers profited from the provincial demand for oil and wine and such staple manufactures as pottery lamps only to suffer later from provincial competition, which extended even to the markets of Italy itself. Decentralization did not stop with this. It went on within the provinces, local communities becoming increasingly self-sufficient and commerce of diminishing importance.

Trade had already ceased to conquer new markets. Its limits had been fixed in a general way when the po-

litical frontiers were stabilized by the principate. Greek and Roman merchants and their goods, like classical civilization and imperial politics, did not penetrate lands far from the water-routes of the Mediterranean world and the mildness of climate of this great inland sea or of the Atlantic. Geography, means of transport, civil and military policy, and the contrast between civilization and barbaric cultures combined to set limits to Roman society and commerce.

Within the empire, country villagers even of such a remote and recent province as Britain were customers for the standardized Hellenistic-Roman manufactures; but the rural population, especially of the frontier districts and of the East, were not fully assimilated to urban civilization and remained an incompletely exploited though not very promising market. The cultural backwardness and isolation of the peasants were emphasized in many parts of the empire by their economic subjection. The social gulf which limited the cities in finding purchasers for their wares was thus in part due to exploitation of the country people as producers.

In spite of these difficulties and of the fixity of political frontiers, city-life and business activity had expanded during the principate. It is not clear that the possibilities of surmounting obstacles and of opening new outlets for trade had been exhausted by the end of the second century. The loss of the capacity to create new markets may well have been a symptom, rather than the cause, of the decline of the prosperity of trade. It is indeed very doubtful whether the continued extension of markets and of commercial exploitation was essential for the

continuance of prosperous trade. The plausibility of this argument in so far as it concerns the marketing of durable goods and especially of machines which manufacture still more goods does not hold for ancient commerce. This was largely of foodstuffs, textiles, common utensils and other products consumed steadily and needing regular replacement. The decisive factor (aside from political insecurity) was not the lack of new markets but the change in the character of the old ones—the tendency to satisfy the local demand by local supplies.

#### DECAY OF MANUFACTURE

In manufacture, this meant the small shop of the free or freed craftsman working for the local market. Export specialties declined. Methods were less efficient and products cruder. Only in state factories for military clothing and for weapons did large-scale production persist, and this ceased with the empire. The decline of the crafts kept pace with that of commerce until the inheritance of special techniques in pottery, metals and textiles was largely confined to the East. While the Syrians and Greeks continued at home to be masters of arts which they had taken west and had controlled there, they and their crafts gradually abandoned Europe, save chiefly for Sicily, until the Moors in Spain and the medieval Italian cities revived the influence of the East. The western artisans, like the merchants, lost their place in society. They were scattered, their numbers reduced, their guilds, or *collegia*, lost from sight. The gap between the "colleges" and medieval guilds has not been safely bridged by historians, except perhaps for Italy, and is

like that between the political institutions of ancient and medieval cities. The small shop and freedom from slavery did not mean that the craftsmen were able to retain independence of action. The decline of their liberty was only partly due to the compulsory and hereditary burden laid by the late empire upon certain occupations and to the effect of imperial taxation. The decrease of intercommunication and the narrowing of economic horizons cost craftsmen much of their freedom of movement. They became attached to localities and dependent upon the landed proprietors or bishops or monasteries. This situation was in keeping with the triumph of the country over the city in economics as in politics.

#### PEASANT FARMING AND THE COLONATE

The simpler economic order meant the predominance of agriculture over manufacture and commerce. The self-sufficient communities were in immediate contact with fields and flocks, and the products of these were worked up directly by the handicrafts for local use. Agriculture itself was transformed. Large-scale farming with central management, scientific methods, slave labor and a marketable surplus disappeared. Peasant farming took its place. This change was not accompanied by the break-up of the large estates. Indeed they became larger, at the same time that the scale of operations became smaller. The cultivators were tenants. Their equipment was simpler, their crops less specialized and their methods cruder, and their production was chiefly for consumption on the estate. This system was less productive but more practical or convenient in the condition of the later

empire than the treatment of cultivation as a business enterprise.

Tenant-farming had been known in the late republic. On the estates of Pompey were tenants who were at once free peasants and clients. In this way the farming of the peasant landowner of the early republic was adapted to the estate of the great landowner. It was the spread of tenancy under the principate that marked the decline of slavery in agriculture. Peasant tenancy prevailed as early as the second century on the vast imperial estates (known as *saltus*) of Africa, from which there is direct evidence. Signs of a like tenure elsewhere are confirmed by the legislation of the fourth century. Great privately-owned properties were organized like those of the emperors. These estates centered in villas or country-houses where lived the private magnate or the imperial agent (the chief farmer, or *conductor*, who was in effect the chief tenant). Aside from the chief farm connected directly with the villa, the estate was divided into the small farms of the tenants, and, already in the second century, at least on some imperial estates, the tenants owed a number of days of labor to the chief farmer as a condition of their tenantry. Dues in produce and in labor were the characteristic return for these peasant leases. This system of cultivation came to be dominant throughout the Mediterranean world, and in the disorders that accompanied and followed the disappearance of the empire in the West such peasant free-holdings as had survived the rise of the slave *latifundia* tended to become tenancies under the protection of great proprietors.

The status of the tenants is known as the colonate.

The term implies more than the rental of land, for the status made the tenant a dependent of the landlord and obligated him to remain on the estate. He was not a slave nor usually a freedman. He was most likely to be a descendant of peasants, Italians, Gauls, Iberians, Berbers or others, and himself a freeman before the law. Yet the *coloni* became bound to the soil as were their successors, the serfs of the Middle Ages. There has been much dispute as to how this came about. The term *colonus* descended the social scale from the settler and soldier in the "colonies" of the early republic to the tenant on a great estate of the late republic, and then to the soil-bound peasant on great landed properties of the empire.

Servile tenancy had age-old precedents, in Egypt and the East, in Lacedaemonia and Thessaly, at Carthage and Syracuse and perhaps in pre-Roman Gaul. Certain forms of land-tenure recognized by the laws of the principate for furthering the use of waste lands may have encouraged it. Essentially however it was the result of the economic and social inferiority of the tenant combined with basic importance for the revenues of the landlord and of the state. Tenantry became bondage through the weakness of the peasants in the face of the agents of the emperors and of private magnates, amid political and social conditions which emphasized the obligations of the weak to the strong. The tenant was the "client" of the landlord proprietor, who as patron represented him at law and treated him as a dependent inferior. He had normally no means of livelihood save his tenancy,



to which he was tied, moreover, by obligations in money, produce and labor for rent and other dues. If he were a freedman who had leased a ground-plot from his master, his ties were still closer. The tenant had little defense against the arbitrary demands of a chief farmer or other imperial officials or of private landlords. Irregular exactions and other oppression on imperial estates in the second and third centuries are revealed by the appeals of groups of *coloni* to the emperor over the heads of his agents, but occasional redress of grievances provided no general remedy for local tyranny.

Imperial policy tended, on the contrary, to strengthen the bondage, for more rigorous taxation increased the obligations placed upon the *coloni* and the importance of keeping them on the land. Landlords and imperial agents could not permit *coloni* to escape from land with which they had been counted in the assessment. Nor could the fiscal needs of the government allow it. Constantine in a law of 322 forbade their flight, and similar more drastic laws followed in the late fourth century and after. Legislation joined the landlords' pressure in creating of the *coloni* a caste of cultivators. They and their descendants were attached to the land as a part of the estates without freedom of movement and occupation and even without the Roman slave's expectation of manumission. They were above the status of the slave in that they could not legally be deprived of their use of the land. This assured them a combination of hereditary tenancy and bondage, the serfdom which characterized a large part of the agricultural workers of the Middle Ages.

## THE VILLA

The significance of the great estates was not simply in the development of the colonate. They became the self-sufficient economic and social units of the society that was losing its wider ties. Such were the imperial estates in Africa, which dated from the early principate and in some cases were as extensive as principalities. Such too were private properties of the fourth and fifth centuries in Gaul. Similar holdings were to be found in the other provinces. Imperial *saltus* were rivaled by the estates surrounding the villas of great officials and of favorites of the emperors. Private magnates as well as imperial procurators and *conductores* were made responsible for the maintenance of law and order as for the taxes of their lands. They gained a personal jurisdiction and immunity from interference in the domestic affairs of their villas that has already been discussed in connection with political decentralization. They were the forerunners of the feudal lords, and their estates became mediæval manors.

The development of these great landed properties not only was in contrast with the organization of agriculture under the municipal system at the height of its prosperity but was at its expense. The cities, as we have seen, leaned heavily upon the land, and the spread of cities had meant a spread of territory under municipal control. The estates just described were independent of this control, and their growth was a reversal of the urban trend. Some large tracts of fertile and populated land, chiefly in the possession of the emperors, had never been incor-

porated in the territories of cities, and others were withdrawn from this jurisdiction by the influence and position of their owners. Before the end of the fourth century, the government legalized the independence of the great landlords from the tax-jurisdiction of the cities. While the tax-burden of the municipal aristocracies became more oppressive, their revenues were being impaired by shrinking territories as well as by changing agricultural methods. This was linked with the "flight" of the *curiales* (into the class of great landlords and even into tenancy under these) and the repeated efforts of the government to stop it, which were dealt with in the first chapter. Thus the city was, in a sense, supplanted by the villa or manor, since the center of social gravity shifted from one to the other. In such a change institutions are created as well as destroyed. Here we see again how the social organization of the late empire furnished essential and constructive elements for medieval society.

Like feudalism, the medieval manor was not the product solely of Roman institutions. It was more than a villa, or manor-house, and a collection of subject tenants. It was also a village community with a common program of cultivation and pasturage. This was far older and more enduring than the Roman Empire and the capitalist slave estate. Communal agriculture was marked by the cultivation of open fields according to a customary rotation of grain and fallow (triennial in the north and biennial in the south), and by common rights of pasturage in these fields after harvest and in the meadows and woodlands. The possession of the fields was divided

among the villagers, who held individual pieces of ground, unseparated by walls or hedges—long strips in the north and squarer pieces in the south, as suited the use of the wheeled and the drag plow respectively. The rigor of communal obligations was less severe in Mediterranean lands than in the Celtic and Germanic north, but in both the peasants and the lord were obliged to conform to the practice of the community. The barbarian invasions destroyed many villages and threw their lands out of cultivation, but German agricultural settlements reinforced the communal tradition. In much of medieval Europe, the agricultural communities of the northern and Mediterranean types illustrated the persistence of primitive practices which had been left untouched by the rise and decay of large-scale cultivation and had served as the basis for the economy of the Roman villa and colonate.

#### PHYSICAL THEORIES OF AGRICULTURAL DECAY

The direct dependence of agriculture upon the raw materials provided by nature in weather and soil has encouraged students to look for the causes of changing methods and lessened productivity in the physical factors of production behind landholding, labor, technique and markets. Climate and soil have thus been made to bear the responsibility for the decay of ancient civilization in general. Changes in nature are held to be the dynamic element in a changing society, and man is relieved, at least in part, of the burden of creating and maintaining states and high cultures. Their rise and fall, according to the physical, or geographic, interpretation of history,

are dependent not so much upon the complexities of human nature as upon natural forces whose character and effects are supposed to be capable of more exact determination. Such a solution would have the appeal of simplicity and of apparent inevitableness. It has been sought in the exhaustion of the soil's fertility and in the diminution of the rainfall. For these physical factors no proof of the sort recognized in the physical sciences and gained through laboratory experiment or exact observation has been offered. They, like other theories in this matter, rest largely upon historical inference, and their soundness must be judged accordingly.

The application of these hypotheses begins with Greece of the last three centuries B.C., passes to Italy of the principate and is extended to the western empire and even the East of later centuries. The depopulation of Greece and the decay of its cities formed a theme of lament for Greek and Roman authors from Polybius, the historian in the second century B.C., to Dio Chrysostom, the orator at the beginning of the second century A.D. Even if we allow for rhetorical exaggeration and for a tendency to make much of the decline of famous towns and to overlook the prosperity of those which had gained importance since the prime of Hellas, it remains evident that the Greek peninsula (not, however, the Greek coast of Asia Minor) had lost in wealth as well as in glory. Italy followed in the second century A.D., with complaints of depopulation and of the abandonment of the land. Large tracts were added to pasturage or fell into disuse, and legislation is witness of the efforts of the emperors to encourage the cultivation of waste fields and the rearing

of children. The clearest instance of this decay is the plain of Latium, the Campagna near Rome, where there were under the early republic considerable population and extensive works for drainage or irrigation and where from before the third century A.D. people were few, production was meager, and summer drought, marshes and malaria ruled, until redemption was recently undertaken.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the richer volcanic plains of Campania and Sicily suffered no such eclipse, and gardens and orchards continued to flourish. In the alluvial lands of the Po valley and in the western provinces agriculture was still advancing under the principate. In these regions decline waited upon the late empire, though the development of the colonate was already under way. It is natural that historians and geographers have been inclined to consider the problem as almost exclusively concerning Greece and Italy, the centers of the tradition of Greek culture and of the Roman state, where decay appeared earlier than elsewhere and is better attested. This has seemed to ancient writers and to modern scholars an omen of the fate of classical society.

#### LOSS OF FERTILITY?

There were small crops, uncultivated fields, inefficient and wasteful farmers, neglectful absentee owners and agrarian pessimism, as there always have been. There were, as in Greece and Italy today and in New England, poor and rocky soils that could not compete with more fertile valleys and plains in newly won lands. Cultivated

<sup>1</sup> Note should be made of a recent application of the cyclic theory of disease organisms (oscillations of virulence and mildness) to malaria and the problem of the Campagna in Roman times.

slopes, if unterraced and carelessly plowed, might lose their fertility through erosion, and the productivity of rich fields might temporarily be reduced by heedless exploitation. Yet these conditions are far from proving a general cumulative and lasting exhaustion of fertility or a diminution of rainfall. They point rather to special and local difficulties. It is questionable to infer from them that a general decline of production was due to a failure of nature, especially in view of the connection of this decline with a revival of peasant farming with its restricted range of crops, its rude methods and its independence of external markets.

Soil exhaustion is not an inevitable process of nature. It depends upon how man uses the land. Constant cropping may rapidly (though not fully) deplete the nitrogen. The exhaustion of other minerals is much slower (it has indeed apparently not yet occurred in the lands of the Roman Empire), but acidity may prevent the plants from drawing upon the minerals in the soil. Lack of nitrogen and acidity are not difficult to remedy. If fields fall out of cultivation, they are soon restored without aid, unless so situated that erosion occurs. Or nitrogen and lime may be applied to them. The characteristic soils of Mediterranean lands are considered unusual in their capacity for maintaining and recovering their productivity of themselves. The ancients knew better than did Europeans before the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries how to prevent and to remedy soil-exhaustion by varied fertilization, fallow and the return of some crops to the soil. To such factors must be attributed the prosperity of agriculture in all but a few regions under

the principate, after centuries of cultivation. That widespread and continued exhaustion of the soil then set in does not accord with what is now known of causes of fertility and of its loss.

## CLIMATIC CHANGE?

The alternative physical theory is that of climatic change, which is held by its exponents to be of two sorts—the alternation of long periods of wet and dry weather and the gradual lessening of average rainfall in Mediterranean lands since classical times. The opening of the summer dry season has, they believe, been pushed far back into the spring. This change has resulted in the disappearance of the forests, the rapid run-off of water in winter and early spring, and the meagerness of the streams in the summer. There has been therefore not only general drought but such local consequences in Latium and elsewhere as denuded slopes, lowland farms injured with siltage, clogged river mouths, and hence marshes and malaria. Desiccation in lands already desert or nearly so has meant, some students of climate hold, dry wells, ruined water-works and decayed cities. Migrations of nomads from Arabia and central Asia, including the impulse that set the Germans in motion in the fourth century, are likewise explained by either a steady or a recurring diminution of rainfall.

The economic and social results attributed to a hypothetical change of climate can not be used to prove it, and stray and uncertain literary references to weather are untrustworthy as evidence. Hence, reliance has to be put upon such data as the levels of lakes and seas, chiefly



in Asia, and the rings of growth of trees in the southwest of the United States. Although these are important subjects of investigation, their bearing upon Mediterranean climate and society is, at least as yet, purely speculative. Thus, the supposed pulsations of climate are constructed of various bits and sorts of evidence from widely separated areas and of doubtful dating, and their correlation with periods of social decline and revival is so uncertain that it is difficult to tell whether dryness or wetness is best for civilization. The evidence for diminishing rainfall at the close of the classical era and after is as insecure as that for climatic cycles. The ancients were only too familiar with the uncertainty and meagerness of the rain. From early times they practised irrigation and dry-farming, cultivated plants that seek out and retain moisture in the dry season, and tapped distant and underground sources of water and stored it in reservoirs. There is no data for a direct comparison of rainfall of different epochs.

The responsibility of man is greater than the climatic theory allows. Deforestation and its effects on the water-supply may result from his activity—the extension of cultivation and the pasturage of sheep and goats, forest fires and the search for fuel. Greece and Italy suffered from wars of conquest and civil war which brought destruction and confiscation, from the growth of large estates which displaced the free peasantry, and then from competition of provinces and emigration to them. Yet even in Latium agriculture did not disappear. Gardens and villas continued until after the Antonines. Only then were the drainage works allowed to fall into ruin

amid the catastrophes of the third century and the widespread political and economic decay that followed. How can the climatic hypothesis account both for the decline of production in parts of Greece and Italy under the principate and for the extraordinary extension of olive-culture and of settled life into the hitherto barren lands of North Africa on the edge of the desert in the same period? And what of the third century, which was one of general disaster in the empire and yet saw the height of the power of Palmyra, whose decay is considered a stock case for desiccation? Palmyra's rise and fall seem to be corollaries of politics and trade rather than of century-long variations of climate. Throughout the Near East prosperity and adversity were dependent upon administrative care and neglect of irrigation canals and storage systems. There were periods of decline, as under the late empire, even in fertile Egypt, where the already rich soil was constantly renewed and water supplied by the floods from mountain snows and tropical rains remote from the Mediterranean world.

So far as we certainly know, the control and use of natural resources changed rather than the resources themselves, the organization of society rather than the physical environment. City life gave way to country life. The municipal aristocracies lost their control of the land and their place in the politics of the empire. Cities lost their commerce and industry, as markets and exchange were localized. Political decentralization set in at the expense of the autocracy which had done much to crush the cities. The beneficiaries of the economic and political disintegration were the lords of the great estates.

The transition can perhaps therefore best be summed up in the contrast between the central rôle of the city both in the Greece of Athens and Sparta and in the second century empire and its almost complete absence from early medieval Europe. Old urban sites were often still occupied or later reoccupied as centers of royal and feudal administration and seats of bishoprics and monasteries; but the revival of town-life upon them was a fresh growth of the Middle Ages. Although in the Levant cities persisted, it was only with diminished importance in comparison with the countryside (as was the case particularly in Egypt) and with a lack of community solidarity and responsibility under Byzantine despotism. The passing of the antique city was synonymous with the passing of the antique social order and its civilization.

#### RACIAL DEGENERACY?

A naturalistic explanation, if not to be had in geography, has been looked for in biology. There are points in the situation of the empire that suggest a loss of physical vigor on the part of the municipal aristocracies and of the peasantry—their diminishing military service, the decline of the upper-class birth-rate (often called race-suicide) and the depopulation of certain agricultural districts and towns of Greece and Italy. If these points proved a basic biological degeneracy, the decline of political and economic activity might be supposed to stem from the same source. But biological change would be an unwarranted and unnecessary assumption in the light of the social and economic factors. Race-suicide and a preference for peace rather than war were characteristic

of prosperous and cultivated city-life. Depopulation in Greece and Italy was a result of the competition of more favored regions in the provinces and of the growth of great estates at home.

A possible change of physical character (what is technically called *race*) among men of the Roman Empire is more plausibly suggested by the mixture of Romans and Greeks, Syrians and other Orientals, western provincials and Germanic barbarians. Here was a confusion of racial types, but this in itself did not mean racial degeneration. Romans and Greeks and all other peoples of the Mediterranean were, from the time of their entrance into history, mixed in the physical features by which anthropologists seek to distinguish the races of men—in the shape of their skulls, in their color, in stature and the like—nor could Romans and Greeks be set apart from other Mediterranean men by such tests. Moreover these physical differences have not been shown to mean relative inferiority and superiority for creating and maintaining civilization. The case for racial contamination rests merely on inference, and this leads to confusion. Was the debasing blood that of the eastern Mediterranean which had developed crafts, shipping, business, alphabets, powerful city-states and influential cultures and religions before Rome was more than a village, or was it that of the rude provincials and barbarians of the west and north? And, if the racial stock is decisive in its influence, why should not the blood of hard-working Levantines or of "simple" barbarians have regenerated rather than debased the Roman aristocracy into whose diminishing ranks they were recruited? There is no con-

nection that we yet know between race as a physical concept (which it properly is) and capacity for organization, for business, for war, for art, or for philosophy. These and similar social or cultural achievements cannot be made matters of race any more than peoples such as the Romans, bound together by ties of language, history, religion, customs and the like and by a resulting community of interest, are to be described as races.

#### DECAY OF ROMAN PUBLIC SPIRIT

The changes in moral tone and public spirit which have been wrongly blamed upon racial degeneracy were social and cultural in origin. They were under way in the prosperous society of the principate and were furthered by the political and economic insecurity of the third and later centuries. The Christian moralist Salvian's condemnation of the vices and selfishness of the Gallo-Roman aristocracy of the fifth century and his contrast of these with the virtues of the invading barbarians and of the early Romans, those "ancient patterns of virtue" who "directed all their efforts, all their labor, to the common good, and by their individual honesty contributed to the growing wealth of the state" were anticipated by pagan writers of the first two centuries of the empire. Juvenal and Tacitus, poet and historian, Petronius and Lucian, novelist and rhetorician, pictured the demoralization of life under the principate—indolence, extravagant display and voluptuous attention to bodily comfort, drunkenness and gluttony, intrigue and debauchery, flattery and parasitism. Tacitus in his *Germany* made the rude, simple purity of the Germans

an attractive contrast. Although the excesses cannot be accepted as typical (witness the sounder society portrayed by the letters of Pliny the Younger and the continued vitality of commerce, government and city-building under the Antonines), they were signs of the luxury, ease and self-indulgence that attended the prosperity and peace of the empire. The significance of "race-suicide" was similar, as has been noted. Polybius should perhaps have been more generous in the motives to which he attributed the decline in the number of children among the Hellenistic Greeks; but, when he charged a passion for display or for wealth or for idle pleasures or at best the desire to bring up one or two children in luxury and to leave them well off, he rightly correlated race-suicide with economic well-being. "With few exceptions, we all now live," wrote the author of the essay *On the Sublime* (first century A.D., wrongly attributed to Longinus), "never working or undertaking work save for the sake of praise or of pleasure, instead of that assistance to others which is a thing worthy of emulation and of honor."

"*Virtù*," said Machiavelli, the Florentine political thinker of the Renaissance, and by this he meant not private virtue but the capacity for achievement in public life, especially in war, "*virtù* produces peace, peace idleness, idleness disorder, disorder ruin." This is too simple, but it has force for Rome. A peace which meant imperial autocracy and bureaucratic centralization crippled local freedom and responsibility and hence undermined the self-respect of the municipal ruling classes and the importance of local citizenship. Roman imperial citizen-

ship, broader, more ideal and less concrete in its duties, was in turn emptied by despotism of its liberties and its pride. While community spirit declined, private gain and pleasure were fostered by urban wealth and luxury brought by commercial activity, which was a corollary of the unity and peace of the empire.

#### COSMOPOLITANISM

With these went cosmopolitanism, the mixture of traditions (rather than of races) which came from the mixture of populations, from East and West. The Greeks had already experienced it in making the eastern Mediterranean Hellenic, and now the stern virtues of the Roman farmer and soldier, which the Greek Polybius had once idealized to the disparagement of the suppleness, subtlety and unpatriotic self-interest of his countrymen, softened in the warmth of Hellenistic culture. Slaves and freemen, traders and artisans, poured into Italy and the western provinces. It was, Juvenal said, the discharge of the Orontes into the Tiber. There was, besides, the migration of western provincials with distinctive cultures, such as the Punic of Africa and the Celtic of Gaul, and other ruder peoples. Local customs and loyalties were uprooted and confused, and the urban lower classes came to be composed of men whose traditions were alien to the Greek and Roman city-state and citizenship. Their manners had often been warped by "servility." From slavery, many of the newcomers and their heirs rose through enterprise and cleverness to wealth and importance. They had an aristocracy of freedmen, the *Augustales*, or municipal priesthood of

Rome and Augustus, and they advanced beyond this to fill the gaps in the local governing aristocracies. They were the *novi homines*, caricatured by Petronius in the classic instance of the banquet of the freedman Trimalchio. To the activity of such men and to their Hellenistic past, the empire owed much of its prosperity and civilization. In public spirit, there was gain in breadth and tolerance, such as in the greater humanity in the treatment of slaves, and some advance from provincialism toward the Stoic ideal of universal brotherhood. Yet distant loyalty to a world society was not concrete and intimate enough in its appeal to be an effective substitute for the narrow, more intense community or to counteract the diversity of traditions in the melting-pot.

The problem of assimilation was not limited to immigrants. More numerous were the people who stayed at home in the provinces in old cities or in newly founded ones. Outside the cities lay the peasantry more or less deeply influenced by their civilization but subject to them rather than participating in their life. This social gulf was a serious weakness, fostered but not originated by Roman policy. It has a bearing also on the problem of the army dealt with in the first chapter, although there seems to be slight evidence to support the suggestion of a recent historian that it was class hostility which excited the soldiery in the third century against the bourgeoisie. The recruits from ruder peoples of the mountain valleys and the frontiers were, on account of their own ignorance of Roman political traditions and culture, a far more serious menace to civil government and economic security than was the peasantry of the settled provinces.



Under the conditions of the empire, therefore, Romanization and Hellenization did not mean a general understanding of the cosmopolitan ideal of the principate, to say nothing of the acceptance of the Graeco-Roman idea of the responsible republican community and citizenship. The empire with its centralized autocracy, its dependence upon an army, its peace and commercial expansion and prosperity, its diversity and cosmopolitanism, was incompatible with citizenship. Its own character was destructive of the very loyalties upon which it rested as a world community, both those to the municipalities and those to Rome, the world city.

#### THEORY OF LIFE-CYCLE

The change in ancient society was wide and deep enough to seem a movement of nature. It gained an air of inevitability from its inclusiveness. Government and army, land and labor, trade and communication, the crafts and higher arts, languages, popular traditions, literature, learning and religion were inseparably bound up in it. It involved emperors, barbarian generals, bureaucrats and soldiers, landlords, *coloni*, merchants and artisans, freedmen and slaves, philosophers and priests. It seemed to depend upon none of these in particular and was an affair of society as a whole. Politics and economics blend in the larger trends that emerge from the details of the decline of the ancient city and empire—unity, prosperity, peace and the cessation of expansion after centuries of Greek and Roman colonization and conquest, and then the rise of despotism and of servitude, followed by decentralization and the increasing rudeness

of society. It is no wonder that a single all-inclusive formula has been sought in the idea of decline or decay as a natural event in the life of a state or of a civilization. Polybius applied the idea prophetically to Rome after her final triumph over Carthage, saying:

That to all things, then, which exist there is ordained decay and change I think requires no further arguments to show: for the inexorable course of nature is sufficient to convince us of it.

But in all polities we observe two sources of decay existing from natural causes, the one external, the other internal and self-produced. The external admits of no certain or fixed definition, but the internal follows a definite order . . . those who are capable of taking in the whole drift of my argument can henceforth draw their own conclusions as to the future of the Roman polity.

The astronomical metaphor of rise and decline as of the stars and the succession of the seasons from spring to winter have afforded interpretations of history similar to the analogy of the decay of old age following youth and maturity. The influence of modern biological study has encouraged the use of old metaphors and has added the notion of evolution. As applied to history, this usually means little more than development, and so the continuous and gradual change of society is interpreted as growth.

Figures of speech tend to direct our interpretation of history and to fix its patterns. The Fall of Rome is held to be not unique but an example of a general law of nature. Societies are considered organisms like plants

and animals, though of a higher order. History is made to move in life-cycles. Polybius' "inexorable course of nature" was the result of a doctrine of degeneration of government that was current in Greek political thought and that was adopted, we have seen, by Machiavelli in the Renaissance. The cyclic theory and its application to Rome became a commonplace of the philosophy of history, and it was recently given fresh vogue by Spengler in the *Decline of the West*. According to this interpretation, classic culture was dying, while European was being born.

The cycle as a process of nature and the organic character of societies and cultures are, however, unproved assumptions and are dangerous if treated uncritically as more than suggestive metaphors. Decay and decline are likely to become theoretical necessities to which historical events must be made by the historian to conform, and we are taken by philosophical speculation beyond the realm of men and the kaleidoscopic play of their needs, ambitions and ideals and of circumstance and coincidence. We evade rather than solve the problems of classic society by lumping all of its shifting elements into an organic whole. The youthfulness of its members was ever being renewed as fresh generations grew up among changing attitudes and institutions. Medieval society was not born as a new and independent organism. Its "youth" is not distinguishable from the "old age" of classical society merely by calling one German and the other Roman, for the institutions and culture of the Middle Ages were continuous with those of the late empire. Activity became less in certain directions which for us

connote civilization—citizenship, trade, industry, science, philosophy and art. On the other hand, interest in religion increased, and so did loyalty to individuals as military leaders and manorial lords and to the Church and village communities.

If we speak of loss of vigor or of vitality, we are describing not a mysterious palsy of age affecting men or society but a weakening of the distinctive social ties of antiquity and of the incentives, aspirations and ideals of classical civilization. In the change of institutions, change in the state of mind has a large rôle. It is possible and indeed probable that there are changes in the psychology of peoples which are in a general way repeated, though amid circumstances so different that it would not be safe to make predictions. The similarity of these changes rests upon a fundamental uniformity of human nature. Herein may be an element of truth behind the cyclic theory.

### III

## THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

### DECLINE OF THE CLASSIC TRADITION

ANCIENT literature and philosophy, architecture and sculpture have more vital meaning for most of us than have ancient political and economic institutions. Classical achievements in thought and art have outlived political forms and social systems. These works did not survive, however, without suffering a great eclipse at the close of the ancient world, as a result of the far-reaching changes of taste and idea and of means of expression which took place in the Roman Empire.

These changes began in the Greek world before the supremacy of Rome. Hellenistic times were in art and literature already very different from fifth century Greece and showed decadence when measured against pure classical standards. The later age was characterized by a diversity of form, of standard and of audience, an individualism and emotionalism of expression, a scholarly learning and a realistic social comedy and satirical mime that were in sharp contrast with the universality of form and material, the sureness and dignity of idea and of expression in Attic tragedy, sculpture, history and oratory. The Hellenization of Rome was a further step.

The Latin tradition blending with Hellenistic culture, though inclined to imitation, produced works of distinction—the orations, letters and treatises of Cicero, the poetry of Ovid, Virgil, Horace and Catullus, the history of Livy and of Tacitus, the Stoic counsels of Seneca and the satire of Juvenal. Greek statuary, often imitations of fifth and fourth century statues, and Greek architectural forms were imported, and Hellenistic painting adorned the walls of town and country houses. Technique remained high under the principate, with the arts largely in the hands of Hellenistic artists, and there was considerable originality due to Roman inspiration, especially in architecture, which was peculiarly suited to the Roman predilection for engineering. There was evidence, however, of a loss of refinement or even a provincialism in taste and technique which was a sequel to cosmopolitanism and became from the second century a marked feature of cultural change, especially in the West. This was probably due in part to the patronage of Romans, who had in their tradition and life more of the practical and administrative than of the aesthetic and intellectual and who were an example of the limitations of Hellenization.

Some contemporaries noted the change and related it to the loss of moral tone and public spirit which has been discussed in the previous chapter. Tacitus, in the *Dialogue on Oratory*, dealt with the emptiness of this distinctive art of Greek and Roman public life. Its function was lost when liberty was replaced by repose under “a well-regulated constitution.” The author of *On the Sublime* complained of the absence of “sublimity” in the

writing of his day and the craving for intellectual novelties. He denied the responsibility of the monarchy that had brought the "peace of the universal world." He blamed the love of money and pleasure, the enslavement of men by passions not by princes, and, champion of men's moral responsibility though he was, he admitted the influence of environment in the shape of the wealth and luxury of the cities.

Classical culture was made and unmade in the cities. The most characteristic classic arts, architecture, sculpture and Attic drama as well as oratory (or rhetoric), developed under the patronage of the city as a community, loyalty to which was identified with loyalty to the city's gods. The educated classes, the schools, the workshops, the leisure and means for cultivating the arts were urban. The classic tradition was undermined by the decline of the meaning of the community, the rise of materialistic individualism and the cosmopolitan mixture of cultures. The first two weakened the vitality of the tradition; the last modified and largely supplanted it. The success of Hellenization and Latinization was remarkable in making Greek and Latin the media of government, trade, and education from Britain to Egypt, in extending roads and cities, material civilization and law, and in bringing so many peoples of diverse tradition to look upon each other as fellow-Romans and to participate in the currents of trade and technique, of thought and taste of all Mediterranean lands. But this civilization was not Roman nor yet Greek. It was tolerant of diversity. Syria, Egypt, Punic Africa and Gaul had not been assimilated without making their contributions.

These were not confined to the practices of agriculture, of the crafts and of business, but influenced the mind and the emotions as expressed in literature and art.

#### DECAY IN LITERATURE AND EDUCATION

The decline of tradition into imitation and of originality into triviality and the influence of the non-classic East and of provincialism and barbarism can be seen in the literature of the later empire. The brilliance of Latin writing in the age of Augustus and the early principate was not maintained after the passing of the generation of Juvenal, Tacitus and the younger Pliny in the first part of the second century. The rest of this century and the disastrous third were almost barren. There had been a revival of Greek literature, but in great works it had little more to offer than Latin had, and it scarcely lasted into the third century. After Plutarch, the biographer and moralist, and Dio Chrysostom, the orator, both contemporaries of Tacitus and Pliny, we remember only one or two minor historians, the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius and the masterly satires of Lucian, all of the second century. Latin literature in the fourth century showed renewed life in the graceful, skilful poetry of Ausonius and Claudian, the forceful historical narrative of Ammianus Marcellinus (of Greek origin as was perhaps Claudian) and the polished orations of Symmachus, the defender of the memory of old Rome against the Christian empire in the controversy over the altar of Victory in the Senate-House. In the fifth century, the Gallo-Roman aristocrat Apollinaris Sidonius retained something of the old charm of Latin epistles. Yet these



writings are of interest to us chiefly as the last fruits of the classic tradition and as evidence of decline in creative power and of change in taste.

Command of the means of expression was not lost so much as was greatness in what was expressed. Rhetoric and imitation were called on to supply the impressiveness that was lacking in the content. Attention to form, in moderation a virtue, was a leading element in Greek and Roman literary tradition. A rhetorical bias had been given to education by the former importance of oratory in the city-state, and this easily became a vice through the emphasis on style rather than matter in oratorical exercises upon set themes traditional and empty. The result was the cultivation of figures of speech for their own sake and a strain for striking and novel effects, at best clever and refined and at worst extravagant and absurd. The expression of feeling, even when it seems sincere, has to us an air of artificiality that makes it appear trivial and falsely exaggerated. This is seen in the panegyric and other addresses to the sovereign, which, even in the case of the orations of Symmachus, were poor successors to the oratory of republican council and court. The same blight crept into epistles and poetry. Claudian's panegyric poems were vitiated by flattery and by the note of false grandeur in spite of the reality of his feeling for Rome.

Imitation of the style of great orators and poets and adoption of their figures of speech were natural enough in the schools, but dependence upon borrowed passages even in the extreme form of the *cento*, or patchwork, became characteristic of mature works. For such exercises,

there was help at hand in the anthologies, or collections of the flowers of classic literature (that is, of "familiar quotations"). Significant of the dilettantism of the late empire, these collections have been the means of preserving for us many passages from great as well as lesser authors. This abuse of the cultural heritage was a sterile classicism. The writer and the educator appear to have been laboring under the burden of a golden past whose models stifled originality and encouraged only imitation. Or originality was simulated and novelty gained by fresh and incongruous uses of old figures and by obscure and extravagant artifices.

The classic tradition and rhetorical education, which had been instruments of the spread and standardization of Graeco-Roman culture throughout the cities of the empire, had thus a part in preparing their own decay. But the use of tradition, attention to form, and recognition of the worth of the classics are not necessarily sterile. Education is the transmission of the experience of the past, the initiation into the cultural patterns. Sophocles in the fifth century B.C. and Virgil in the first had built on tradition. Even the Hellenistic Age between these two, though it had some of the weaknesses of the empire, was not lacking in originality and creative power. For the later empire the tradition ceased to have meaning. If the dominance of rhetoric in education had contributed to this result, so too had the changing environment and social attitudes. Pagan writers learned the forms, but found in their intellectual and aesthetic inheritance and in the society around them little or nothing of compelling importance for them to say.

Scholarship too was meager, having little more to offer than barren school-books and encyclopedic compilations. Among them were the text-books of the "liberal arts" of the Roman schools. Seven came to be the accepted number of the arts—the literary subjects of grammar, logic and rhetoric (the *trivium*) and the heritage of classical mathematics and natural science in arithmetic, geometry (including geography), astronomy and music (the *quadrivium*). Examples of these were the grammars of Donatus (fourth century) and Priscian (sixth century), the handbooks of Boethius on subjects of the *quadrivium* and the compendium of all seven arts by Martianus Capella (fifth century). The last, written for beginners and sweetened by incongruous mythological allegory (whence the title, the *Marriage of Mercury and Philology*), attained great vogue. In such books arithmetic and geometry were reduced to bare, unexplained propositions, even stated sometimes in verse. For history, the student and general reader had abridgments and epitomes, the fate even of the historians of early Rome, Polybius and Livy. For classical literature, there were the anthologies; for antiquarian, scientific and curious information, the encyclopedias ranging from the elder Pliny's *Natural History* (first century) to the still more unscientific *Etymologies* of Isidore of Seville (seventh century). These uncritical summaries and compilations of borrowed materials were the meager remains of classical learning and formed its legacy to the early Middle Ages. Medieval education began with the curriculum of the "liberal arts" and with the text-books of the late

empire. The classical tradition in literature and scholarship was weak and disfigured, but it was not dead.

#### ORIENTAL AND CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE

This tradition not merely suffered from dry rot ; it was threatened by alien influences. First came those from the East, which were acting upon Greek culture from the time of the Graeco-Macedonian conquest and exploitation of the Persian empire. It is easier to generalize, however, than it is to isolate specific Oriental elements in Hellenistic and Roman writing. Lack of moderation in sentiment and in expression was recognized by contemporaries as characteristic of Asian Greeks and of Hellenized Orientals, and there are extant examples of verbose bombast and exaggerated sentimentality in private letters of Greek-speaking Easterners. We should expect the literary taste of the Near East to spread along with its population and its luxury and thus to contribute to the extravagances of Graeco-Roman rhetoric. The importance of this influence is difficult to estimate. The refined artifice of "classical" literary circles seems remote from the popular and eastern love of hyperbole and proneness to emotion undisciplined by reason. An echo of this lack of restraint can be caught however in poetry and oratory.

The effect of Oriental emotion upon classical culture through religion and particularly through Christianity was more definite. Christianity brought a new spirit and fresh materials to literature. It came as an enemy of the pagan tradition, seeking to supplant old loyalties with a gospel preached to all men and, at first, especially to

those of the cities who from poverty, servile position and eastern origin were least influenced by classical education. The early Fathers of the Church spoke and wrote not to charm and to amuse but to convince and to edify for the glory of God. Their epistles, polemical tracts and sermons, history and biography, poetry and music demonstrated the decline of classical form and feeling. They were hostile to much of the content of pagan literature and were afraid of its form. Its mythology and rationalism, its appeal to the senses and worldly values were offensive to Christian faith and morality. Its charm of style was a dangerous temptation. The remedy was to shun the infection, and the security of the faith would justify the reproof of Pope Gregory the Great (of the end of the sixth century) to a bishop reported to be teaching Latin literature that "the praises of Christ cannot be pronounced with the same lips as the praises of Jove."

The difficulty with this attitude was that Gregory himself and all others of the western Church wrote and spoke Latin. It was the language of the canon law, of the liturgy, and of the Scriptures. The Latin Vulgate, the translation of the Bible by Jerome at the end of the fourth century, became the recognized, infallible version for the West partly through the influence of Gregory. The grammatical and rhetorical tradition of the language of the Church therefore stemmed from pagan literature. The Roman liberal arts were taught in the Latin Christian schools, with the old rhetorical emphasis and the manuals of the Latin grammarians. Augustine, saint and bishop of Hippo (d. 430), prepared text-books for some of the subjects in the curriculum outlined by Martianus

Capella. The medieval elementary course of study was, as we have seen, pagan, not Christian. Gregory lent support to the neglect of rhetoric and to departure from the pagan models of style by holding it "unworthy to subject the language of the Divine Oracles to the rules of Donatus" (the grammarian), but he had had a Roman education and in general wrote a correct Latin. In the East, Greek and its classics had a like importance. The Church Fathers could not have escaped from their heritage even had they really wished to go to that extreme.

## USE OF ALLEGORY

The relation of Christianity to the classics is well illustrated by the rôle of allegory. To read moral and spiritual meanings into stories human and divine and into the habits of animals and the processes of nature was a favorite practice of Christian writers, but it did not originate with them nor even with the influence of Oriental religion upon the Hellenistic world. Use of it had been made by the Stoics, who evaded the crudities and irrationalities of the gods in the Homeric poems and Greek myths by treating these as allegories. The closely related personification of abstractions, such as Justice and Fortune, much exploited by Christian moralists, was common in Hellenistic and Roman literature. Pagan mythology furnished the allegory for Martianus Capella's text-book. It was religion, however, rather than the classical tradition, that made the allegorical habit of mind prevail. A world of spirit and of invisible powers of darkness and light was one of hidden meanings, and the mystical attitude demanded penetration behind the life

of the body to the spiritual life which it both concealed and allegorically revealed. The actual of this world became the symbol of the real of another and higher world.

This view contributed richly to the development of a poetic tradition of allegory and symbolism which was exemplified in the work of the poet Prudentius (fourth century) and culminated eight centuries later in the *Divine Comedy* of Dante. It provided also a tool for the interpretation of the Bible, which was essential if a body of tradition ranging from the story of the Garden of Eden to the elaborately allegorical book of Revelation was to be harmonized and made morally and spiritually edifying. Jewish scholars of Alexandria had used this method with the Old Testament in the first century A.D., and the Christian theologian Origen of the same city made it from the third century a recognized Christian device for extorting two or three meanings besides the literal one from each passage of Scripture. The sermons of great bishops such as Ambrose of Milan (d. 397) and Augustine showed the mode of instruction by allegory already in full flower, and so natural a way of thinking had it become that Augustine devoted the later chapters of even so personal a work as his *Confessions* to an allegorical exposition of the opening of the book of Genesis. The method answered both to the mystical view of the world and to the need of the civilized Greek or Roman troubled in his acceptance of Scriptures alien to his rationalist tradition. Allegory helped to reconcile classical culture and Oriental religion.

Pagan literature itself did not escape allegorical interpretation. As the Stoics made Homer fit for philosophers,

so Christians saved Virgil. The poet, who was thought to have predicted the coming of Christ in the Fourth Eclogue and whose sad tenderness and sense of filial obedience to the gods made him seem almost a Christian, was supposed to have described in the wanderings of Aeneas the journey of the soul. Thus the *Aeneid* was made a link in the chain of Christian mysticism that led to Dante's allegory of man's sin, suffering and transfiguration.

#### CLASSICISM OF THE CHURCH FATHERS

The Church Fathers were not content with tolerance and Christian interpretation of some of the classics. Their classicism was more positive. Cicero vied with Virgil for their admiration, and Ambrose, Jerome and Augustine were all greatly indebted to him. Jerome indeed dreamed that God had judged him a "Ciceronian" and "no Christian," but remorse did not prevent him from continuing to quote pagans and to enjoy literary scholarship. He was zealous in the collection, copying and comparison of manuscripts. The breadth of his classicism was indicated by his devotion to the playwright Plautus. The Latin version of the Bible was the most important fruit of his scholarship. Ambrose of Milan modeled his influential treatise on the duties of the clergy upon Cicero's *De Officiis* (On Duties). Seneca's expositions of Stoic morality found favor with churchmen along with Cicero's moral and philosophic writings.

The classical interests of the Latin Fathers had precedent in those of the Greek Fathers. The latter from Clement of Alexandria (late second century) to Basil (d.



379) recognized the importance of the Greek tradition in education. Their sermons and doctrinal treatises, poetry and history owed much to pagan literature. Platonism and other classical philosophies colored their theology. Through them, Greek thought influenced the western churchmen. These found it too in Latin versions of Greek philosophy, and the interest of Augustine and others in Cicero was partly due to this. Augustine was familiar with Neo-Platonism, which was in general better known than the works of Plato, in spite of the reverence in which Plato was held. The bishop of Hippo also knew something of the logical works of Aristotle, which were being analyzed, abstracted and translated by Christians. It was with such preparation that, through his controversial writings, Augustine more than any other man molded the Christian thought of the Roman Empire into the theology of the Middle Ages. The most famous of the Christian transmitters of pagan philosophy was Boethius, Roman aristocrat and official of Theodoric the Ostrogoth at the opening of the sixth century. He translated and commented upon writings of Aristotle on logic, wrote able treatises of his own on this subject and composed some theological tracts. Imprisoned and condemned to death, due to the suspicion prevailing between orthodox Romans and Arian Germans, he wrote the *Consolation of Philosophy*, which with fine spirit fused pagan philosophy and Christian hope. His interest in Aristotle and in logical or dialectic reasoning provided the materials for the dialectics of the early Middle Ages and foreshadowed Scholasticism of the later Middle Ages. He has been called the first scholastic.

Cassiodorus, a contemporary of Boethius and more fortunate or more skilful in his service to the Ostrogoths, was a great collector of manuscripts and gave learning an important place in monastic life, as had Basil and Jerome before him. In a manual of instruction for the monks of the monastery which he founded, he gave a summary of the seven liberal arts and encouraged the study of pagan writings and the preservation of the texts. This counsel was in recognition of the value of the best authors and of the classic tradition for a sound understanding of the Scriptures and of the Church Fathers and for the cultivation of a good style.

The best works of the Fathers had already illustrated the last point. It was to be seen in the sermons and treatises of the leading Greek churchmen of the fourth century, such as Athanasius, the enemy of the Arian heresy, Basil, and John Chrysostom (or the golden-mouthed). Their western contemporaries, Ambrose, Jerome and Augustine, had a vigorous, vivid command of Latin prose that was unmatched among the pagans of their age. Hence, all sense of style was not lost when in the early Middle Ages the Fathers largely replaced the classics as models for preachers and theologians.

Poetry too showed the stimulus of Christian thought and feeling upon men of classical training. Although emotion and in some cases ignorance, influenced by Jewish psalm and melody, tended to break the restraints of classic meter and although pagan models were put to incongruous uses (as in epic), Gregory of Nazianzus in Greek, and Hilary of Poitiers, Ambrose and Prudentius

in Latin (all of them of the fourth century) achieved an exceptional mastery of metric forms for fine hymns. They had a part in establishing a noble tradition in the ritual with a music based on the tonality of the Greek modes, and this tradition was not lost despite the later abandonment of the ancient meters in favor of accented and rhymed verse.

In the fourth and fifth centuries the Church gained the literary leadership which it held until late in the Middle Ages. Latin became the medium of the traditions and activities of western Christianity, adopting, as a living language would, a manner of its own and departing from classic syntax and vocabulary and from classic pronunciation and meter. Its manuals were meager, its learning confused and credulous. Yet the Church saved Latin from barbarism and the classical tradition from oblivion. The work of churchmen in the three centuries that followed the victory of Christianity under Constantine kept alive an acquaintance with Cicero and Virgil and the philosophers, passed on citations, quotations and ideas of pagan authors, began the preservation of manuscripts sacred and secular in the monasteries, and transmitted an educational tradition. It was, like other aspects of the medieval inheritance from the ancient world, diminished and changed but not lost.

#### MANUSCRIPTS

The manuscripts are visible evidence of the change. The papyrus roll, which was the form of the books of pagan antiquity, gave way to the codex, characteristic

of early Christian manuscripts. The sheets that were folded and bound to form the pages of the codex in the manner of a modern book were at first often of papyrus, the paper of classical times; but the strength of vellum, or parchment, gave this material the supremacy in the fourth century. By this time the codex was becoming the dominant mode of publication in the place of the roll, for pagan as well as Christian writings. The change in the form and material of manuscripts was a corollary of the rise of the Church to literary primacy. A parallel change took place in the manner of writing. In place of the formal, aristocratic Latin script made of capital letters, Christian writers adopted compromise scripts, the so-called uncial, half-uncial and others, which went far toward the minuscule (or small letter) and had much of the informality of the cursive, or running, hand in everyday use. A similar development had occurred before Christian times in Greek writing, and Greek as well as popular influences in the early Church of the West were at work on its style of handwriting just as on its literary expression. After the disruption of the western empire the cursive had increasing weight, and out of it with the aid of the uncial hands came the local scripts of the early Middle Ages, notably the fine Carolingian minuscule of the Frankish kingdom of the eighth century and after. Likewise, in the later Byzantine Empire, the Greek cursive displaced the uncial to form a minuscule script, though not before the uncial had provided the elements of the dominant alphabet of Slavic Greek Orthodox countries, the Cyrillic.

## LOCALISM IN LANGUAGE

The barbarism from which Latin was saved as an ecclesiastical language was illustrated by the rapid decline in style in Gaul from the correctness and grace of the letters of Apollinaris Sidonius in the fifth century. Men of education and aristocracy were unable to follow good usage in the sixth century and shortly thereafter wrote barbarically, while complete degradation of classic grammar and vocabulary characterized the edicts and letters of the Germanic kings. Language was modified by Christianity. It was revolutionized by the disintegration and barbarism of the late empire.

The most obvious change in this respect was the retreat of Latin from the East and of Greek from the West. Though fusion had never broken down the distinction in common speech, Latin had been the language of the army and of law and administration. Constantine intended his new capital at Byzantium to be a Roman city, and Justinian preferred Latin and the Roman tradition. Yet by his time even in Constantinople Greek was the official language and was evidently used in the courts, for, though the *Code* and *Digest* of Roman law were in the traditional tongue, the commentaries and the new edicts (*Novellae*) were in the language of the people. They called themselves *Romaioi* in Greek. Already Latin had disappeared in official use from the entire East, save in the western Balkans, whence Justinian came. Latin-speaking troops were drawn from that region until it was overrun by Slavs shortly after Justinian's death (565). On the other hand Greek, the language of scholarship,

science and philosophy, of Levantine immigrants and of the liturgy of the early Church, was becoming rare in the West outside of the old Greek centers in southern Italy and Sicily. A portion of Greek philosophy was made available in Latin translations in the fourth and fifth centuries, and thereafter Greek authors were practically inaccessible in the original to western scholarship.

Provincial separatism, like the separation of the eastern and western empires, was correlated with linguistic changes. In the seats of old civilization, Syria and Egypt, native tongues, Syriac and Coptic, revived and became the languages of the heretical churches that embodied the hostility to government and Church at Constantinople. In North Africa the strength of Punic was similar, though due to persistence rather than to revival, and the Berber of the native tribes had never been displaced. Here too native feeling displayed itself in heresy, the anti-Roman Donatism. In Africa, however, as in Syria and Egypt, the future lay chiefly with the Arabic of the Mohammedan conquerors.

In Europe, native languages showed vitality in remote sections, as Basque in the Pyrenees and Celtic in the west and north of Great Britain; but they did not revive in the more Latinized regions. In Gaul Celtic had yielded slowly to Latin and was still strong at the opening of the third century, and yet it contributed little besides place-names and a few common nouns to later speech. The greater danger here to Latin was from the encroachment of Germanic languages, much as Greek and Latin both lost ground in the Balkans to Slavic tongues after the Germanic invasions were over. German advanced or re-

vived west of the Rhine from Switzerland to Flanders and won Britain. These were slight conquests, however, in comparison with the extent of the invasions. In general the invaders were overcome by the "Romance" speech of the Romanized populations.

#### ROMANCE SPEECH

The Latin victory was almost equivalent to a disaster, for the language of the Romans lost its unity and its character. It was no longer Latin but a chaos of local dialects derived from the speech of the common people (called vulgar Latin, from *vulgus*, crowd) and evolving towards the Romance languages—French, Provençal, Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian (and in the Balkans, Rumanian). Already in the ancestors of these modern tongues, Latin was modified almost beyond recognition by local, popular usage, unrestrained by literary models. The passive and future of the old conjugations disappeared and were replaced by the use respectively of forms of the auxiliary verb *esse* (*être*) before the past participle (*il est fait*) and of forms of *habere* (*avoir*) joined to the infinitive (*il fera*). Nouns suffered more than verbs, the accusative serving for all cases and the neuter gender being dropped. Adjectives usually lost the comparative, which was replaced by *plus*, and most adverbs were abandoned in favor of new ones formed by adding *ment* to adjectives. The changes in pronouns may be illustrated from the demonstrative *ille*, which furnished the definite article, *le* in French and *il* in Italian, as well as personal pronouns in both languages (*il* and *le*, *egli* and *lo*).

The vocabulary departed radically from the classic. Many words dropped out, some of which had never been used in common speech. Vulgar or "late" Latin words, unused in literature, were inherited by the Romance tongues, such as *caballus* (*cheval, caballero*), *parabolare* (*parler, parole, palabra*). German contributed military words (for instance, *guerre, blesser*), legal terms (*gage, garantir*), words of the household (*robe, harpe, fauteuil*), and points of the compass. Still more significant illustrations of the extent of German influence were the words for several of the colors and for feelings such as *honte, orgueil, haïr*.

The vocabulary appears at first sight more different from Latin than it really was, because of the great changes of form resulting from the confusion and interchange of consonants and of vowels. Moreover vowels ceased to be long or short. Quantity (measurement in time) was lost and replaced by the distinction between open and closed vowel-sounds. Classic meter, being quantitative, was thus foreign to the Romance languages (and the Germanic languages), in which accent or stress was the basis of rhythm. This change erected a formidable barrier to our full appreciation of antique poetry and prose. The change from quantity to stress took place also in ecclesiastical Latin (and Greek), affecting the rhythm of prose, even as early as that of Augustine, and of poetry in church hymns and the liturgy. A notable result was the music of the liturgic chant, in which time became indeterminate and pitch and accent the controlling elements.



## THE ARTS

The development of the visual arts was subject to the same general influences as were literature and education—the classic tradition, the prosperity and cosmopolitanism of imperial society, the East and Christianity, the decline of wealth and urban power, provincialism and barbarism. The works of architecture, sculpture and painting under the empire reflected a changing taste and technique. There was the fondness for display, for effects gained by monumental size and by boldness of design and color, with lessened regard for justness of proportions and precision of details and a growing crudeness of materials and of finish. The decay in the mastery of form and of processes, which was most marked in the West, was not confined to what we call the fine arts but included the more industrial crafts, such as pottery, metal-ware and stone-cutting, which in ancient times were not sharply distinguished from the fine arts. The change was not a simple degradation of the old artistry. There were creative elements by which architecture evolved new types of construction, and sculpture and painting developed along fresh lines in representation and decoration. Whether or not the East was the primary source of these innovations has been a subject of sharp dispute, and probably the answer should not be the same for all of them.

Christianity had a part in the development by providing freshness of purpose and of subject-matter. It required places of worship and pictures to tell its story and to allegorize the mysteries of the faith. The prob-

lem of the adaptation of pagan art to its needs was similar to that of literature. To the Christian, as to the Jew, much was superstition, idolatry and immorality. There is some evidence of suspicion that the portrayal of figures even from the Christian story was idolatrous, and so it was in a strict interpretation of the second commandment of Moses. Moreover Christian spirituality and emotion sought the expression of an inner, mystic intensity that accorded ill with antique ideals of external beauty, objective definiteness and restraint. Yet the Christian craftsman could no more escape the existing modes of architecture and figure-art than he could the Greek or Latin language. The classic ideals had indeed already given way in pagan art to the grandiose and the emotional. New structural forms were being developed, while Greek details were freely used without regard for their traditional place in Greek construction. Christianity made use of the changing forms and techniques, infusing them with new life and contributing to their transformation into the artistic traditions of the Byzantine East and of the medieval West.

## ARCHITECTURE

Two types of buildings formed the chief inheritance of the church art of the Middle Ages from Roman architecture—the basilica or long hall and the round, polygonal or square structure carrying a central dome. The basilican plan was almost universal in its influence upon churches of the late empire and was adopted by Romanesque and Gothic architecture of medieval Europe. The presence of the congregation at the ritual required an as-

sembly-hall, and the elements of this were at hand in Roman meeting-places—the civil basilica, used for such public business as that of the law-courts, and the *atrium*, or court-yard, of the private dwelling. We need not decide upon the relative merits of the claims put forward for these and other possible sources of the basilican church in order to recognize its Roman character. A long central room (the nave) was usually broadened by side-aisles separated from it by lines of columns, which left the aisles open to the nave and yet supported walls upon which the nave could be roofed. By raising the roof of the nave above those of the aisles these walls could be pierced by windows (i.e., of the clerestory) to light the nave. The roofs and flat ceilings of the churches were generally of wood, whereas the pagan basilicas were sometimes vaulted, with the support of heavy pillars in the place of the colonnades of the aisles. In central Syria, where wood was scarce, the use of vaults was continued and developed in the churches. The columns carried the nave walls either upon the classic entablature of Greek origin or, more generally, upon arches, which were characteristic of Roman architecture and had the advantage of wider span. Corinthian and Ionic columns and capitals and other parts were at first borrowed from classical buildings or modeled after their details, as in the basilican churches built by Constantine in Rome. Two centuries later, at Ravenna and Constantinople, rich capitals, arches and moldings testified to the originality of Christian architects, especially of the Byzantine style, in transforming the classical tradition.

Two other important characteristics of the Christian

basilica were the apse and the transept. The apse, which was sometimes a feature also of the pagan basilica, formed the head of the nave and was usually semicircular and vaulted by a half-dome. Next to it lay the transept, which cut across the head of the nave and the aisles and gave the whole the form of a cross. The significance of this form, as well as its convenience for the clergy and congregation, may have encouraged its use.

The centralized type, like the basilica, had pagan Roman antecedents, being used for mausoleums and baths before its adoption for Christian tombs and baptisteries and occasionally for churches. A common feature of these buildings was the dome, which was as distinctive a trait of Roman architecture in contrast with Greek as the arch and the vault. During the empire, the materials became cruder, a concrete of rubble and mortar instead of regularly laid brick or stone, but the change encouraged rather than hindered the development of the dome. The architects put domes on round and polygonal bases and on square bases, experimenting with methods of filling in the corners and thus discovering the use of the squinch (an arch across the corner) and the pendentive (which by a spherical surface rises from the angle of the corner walls to the circle of the dome). They opened the base-walls by niches and arcades, and went beyond this to the construction of connecting vaulted rooms around the dome so as to take care of its outward thrust. Even buttresses appeared. Thus the buildings of the pagan emperors prepared for the domed tombs and churches of Constantine at Rome and at Constantinople and for the culmination of this development in the age of Justinian

with the octagonal church of San Vitale at Ravenna, the similar SS. Sergius and Bacchus at Constantinople, and, in the same city, the five-domed church of the Apostles (the prototype of San Marco of medieval Venice) and Sancta Sophia, the crown of Byzantine art.

These surpassed their Roman predecessors in structural complexity and consistency, in the quality of materials and workmanship and in elaborateness of decoration. In Sancta Sophia the central type was skilfully modified to gain the advantages of the basilica by the use of two half-domes to support and to extend the central dome, creating a great hall for the congregation and a vast oval system of vaulting. The whole was enriched by arched colonnades and galleries and by an incrustation of marbles and mosaics. This testifies to the wealth of the Byzantine Empire and to the skill of its architects and craftsmen. The domed churches and vaulted basilicas of Syria and Asia Minor as well as the basilicas of Constantinople are further examples for us of the continuation of creative activity and culture of the East at a time when the West was sinking into barbarism. The Byzantine East was a mixture of Greek and Roman traditions, of Syrian techniques and tastes, and of influences from beyond the Euphrates—from Mesopotamia and Persia and perhaps Armenia. Attempts to distinguish among these a primary source of the originality of Byzantine architecture of the sixth century, in view of the incomplete and uncertain evidence, have been unconvincing. The Roman and Byzantine arches and vaults, apses and domes, which were inherited by the vaulted and domed "Romanesque" churches of the medieval

West, were at any rate far from the classical Greek tradition, however we may apportion the responsibility for the changes between the Romans and the Orientals.

The gulf between antique city-state paganism and Christianity was strikingly represented by the contrast between the classic temple and the church. The glory of the temple was external, as was its altar. The worshiper viewed its perspectives from without—the colonnades bearing the entablature, and the sculptured friezes and pediments, which clothed the small room that housed the god within. The exterior of the church was in the early centuries usually given little attention. Its perspectives were, like the worshipers, within it. The colonnades, often quarried from the temples, and the arcades they bore carried the eyes of those who entered the nave toward the apse, in front of which stood the altar, the focus of the ritual. The frieze, brought within and made of mosaic, lined the walls on either side of the nave above the arcades and portrayed a procession of martyrs or a series of Biblical stories. Corresponding to the sculpture of the pediment, which dominated the decoration of the classic temple, were the mosaics of the half-dome of the apse and of the triumphal arch above it, picturing Christ enthroned and allegorizing the victorious faith of Christianity. Surface decoration upon walls which were treated not as architectural members but as fields for pictorial design was to the Christian what sculpture in the round or in high relief had been to the pagan Greek. The dominant gold and purple of the wall-paintings in mosaic, the gilt, red and blue of the coffered ceilings or the spaciousness and color of a great dome, the facings

of variegated marbles, rich hangings and the pomp of the service formed a brilliant interior, glowing with color in the flicker of the thousands of hanging lamps and altar candles and in the warm Mediterranean light admitted by the few windows of the clerestory.

#### SCULPTURE AND MOSAIC

The shift of interest from sculpture to mosaic was the most important change in the figure-arts in the late empire. The sculpture of the first two centuries A.D. maintained the skilful modeling and something of the restraint and symmetry of the Greek tradition. The tendency toward realism, which had appeared in the Hellenistic Age in contrast with the more purely classic idealization of the human figure, was strong in the characteristically Roman portrait-busts and in the reliefs on triumphal arches and columns commemorating the victories of Titus (conqueror of Jerusalem), Trajan and Marcus Aurelius. Similar narrative sculpture in relief was used on sarcophagi, and it was through these that Christians shared in pagan art, for on their stone coffins scenes from the Bible were carved in high relief with a technique which is generally held to be a modification of the Greek tradition by Alexandrian and Syrian craftsmen. Christian and pagan sculpture alike were affected by the decline of the mastery of modeling and of composition. This was well illustrated by the Arch of Constantine, which not only carried reliefs greatly inferior to those of the Column of Trajan but confessed the inadequacy of its builders by displaying panels stolen from monuments of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius. The corollaries

of the decline were the almost complete abandonment of sculpture in the round, from the time of the victory of Christianity, and the use of low relief, whose effect lay in the sharp contrast between light and shadow rather than in the subtler shading of the modeled figure. Sculpture in stone became distinctly subordinate to architecture, and a characteristic use in Byzantine art was in the flat-surfaced capitals, such as supported the arcades in Sancta Sophia. The over-all leaf and vine or geometrical design were thrown into relief by drilling shadows into the stone. Thus even sculpture became primarily a decoration of the flat surface with continuous pattern and simple contrast of tones.

Early Christian painting was on the walls and ceiling of the catacombs in fresco of the contemporary Hellenistic manner. It was superseded by mosaic in the churches of the third century and after. Pictures and designs in mosaic were common in Roman buildings, the material being pieces of marble, which were used for pavements and for the incrustation of lower walls. The mosaics in the churches were of cubes of glass which was colored or had gold leaf imbedded in it by a process which probably originated in Egypt. The simplicity of manufacture and the lightness of material made it possible to cover extensive walls and lofty apses and domes. After some pagan use in the early empire, the art was adopted by the Church and became the distinctive Byzantine mode of decoration. It was a figure-art through which the Church reminded the faithful of its stories and heroes and of the last judgment and the New Jerusalem. In it lived something of classical feeling for the beauty



of plastic bodily form, and yet the sense for surface decoration dominated. There was a strong tendency to simplify the figures and the settings of landscape and buildings into symbols which had much of the character of conventional patterns. Series of martyrs or of prophets and even Biblical scenes and the enthronement of Christ thus became elements of formal design. Decorative motifs of classical and Oriental sculpture and painting and the vine, flowers, and other naturalistic forms of ornament were elaborated into geometrical patterns. The result was the clothing of interior surfaces with continuous designs which were optically impressive by the simple directness of line and flat color. Rich and contrasting tones were essential to the decorative effect.

#### MINOR ARTS

The minor arts from the third to the sixth centuries showed in miniature the same characteristics as sculpture and mosaic. Carving in ivory was similar to that in stone, though in the East it had somewhat more success in continuing the traditions of sculpture as a figure-art. Illustration of manuscripts also reflected the importance of representation for making vivid the message and history of Christianity, but it was closely linked to mosaic and was like this art decorative. It was subject to the dominance of formal design and of the taste for magnificence of color. These elements were even more marked in the engraved gems, the cloisonné enamel, the gold ornaments and the glassware. Such crafts were at home in the workshops of Alexandria and other Near Eastern cities, and in the processes and designs and the

appeal to a taste for luxury and splendor they were characteristic of the Oriental influence upon Graeco-Roman culture. The emphasis upon surface decoration and the fondness for geometric and formal naturalistic patterns were also at home in the East, especially in the lands to the north and east of the Roman limits in the Tigris-Euphrates valley, Persia, Armenia and what is now south Russia. But ornamentation (including the decoration of armor) in color and low relief, with gold, enamels and jewels and in curvilinear designs, characterized also the crafts of the Celts and Germans in the West, where the most important art that flourished after the sixth century was that of the goldsmiths. Typical of their work was the setting of gems in gold cloisonné. The technique and designs may have been affected by influences from peoples to the east, but the direct appeal of surface decoration in vivid color and formalized design to the European and Oriental "barbaric" (in contrast with the classic) taste requires no particular source, eastern or western. For that matter, this decorative taste was in origin not merely "barbarian," that is, from outside Graeco-Roman civilization. A sophisticated naturalistic art, like that of the early empire, may harden into geometric formalism, while delight in color is a characteristic of popular as well as of primitive taste. Both tendencies were apparent within ancient culture with the decline of the classic tradition and the rise of provincial and popular standards.

Mosaics and manuscript illumination, ivories and jewelry formed the mixed heritage of the Middle Ages, preserving a shadow of the Greek understanding of the

human figure but representing a profoundly different artistic vision. Textile patterns and articles of clothing furnish us with still other examples of change. By the third century the tunic was lengthened in the Oriental fashion, while the Roman cloak, the toga, was on its way to becoming simply a scarf for official use, and eastern types of cloaks came into vogue. Trousers (*bracae*), the mark of the barbarian whether Celtic, German, or Persian, became common in Rome. The gradual disappearance from common use of Greek and Roman clothing, including even the lengthened tunic mentioned above, marked the decline of antique culture, and yet the loss was not complete. Once again the Church was the heir, and the civil costume of Romans and Greeks survived, in some respects modified almost beyond recognition, as the distinctive dress of the clergy.

#### THE ECLIPSE OF GREEK SCIENCE

It was the same with the inner as with the outer elements of classic tradition. Greek reason, like costume, lost its secular tone and turned clerical. It ceased to be the key to the understanding of nature and of human life and became, in the guise of theology, the servant of religious faith, which had supplanted it. The Greek sciences and ethical systems were thereby largely lost from view. Religion did not, however, have the initial responsibility for their eclipse. Reason, like the classic tradition in literature and the arts, showed inner weakness before its conquest by Christianity.

The medieval heritage of mathematics and natural science in barren manuals and confused, uncritical encyclo-

pedias was a pitiful remnant of the attainments of the Greeks. Hippocrates in the fifth century B.C. adopted the experimental attitude in medicine. Aristotle in the fourth was a keen and comprehensive observer in the field of biology, interested as a philosopher in discovering the explanation of life in the essential "forms" of things, but seeking these in the facts of nature. In the third century, Archimedes did the same in mechanics. These and other scientists prepared for the development of modern science by establishing observation and experiment as the method of objective inquiry into nature and by founding the sciences of biology and medicine, mechanics and astronomy. Archimedes' remarkable results were due also to the use of mathematics, the tool of reasoning for the physical sciences fashioned by Greek speculative genius. Hellenistic science did not end with the Roman conquest. There were still some great names—the ingenious inventor Hero of Alexandria (first century A.D.?), the astronomer Ptolemy and the physician Galen (both of the second century); but thereafter the decline was unchecked, though the last important mathematician, Diophantus, was as late as the fourth century.

The work of the Greeks in natural science was primarily one of preparation. As a systematic description of the processes of nature based on scientifically tested data, the body of results was meager according to modern standards. The classical scientific tradition was a tenuous one, with few devotees, isolated from the general interest and temper even of cultivated men, unsupported by a steadily recruited corps of workers and exposed to

the dangers of discontinuity. Its method was little understood and seldom applied. It was primarily at home in the schools of philosophy and, except for medicine, had no touch with the practice of the crafts, whose artisans were held in disesteem by philosophers. The speculative element in ancient scientific thought has probably been given too much emphasis as a decisive weakness; but the isolation of science in general from contemporary thought and practice was of prime importance. This was accentuated by the mixture of cultures and the dilution of the Greek tradition in the Roman Empire. The Romans had no inclination for science and it did not establish itself in the Latin West. Scientific interest and method were alien also to the vast majority of the Hellenistic and Oriental populations of the cities eastern and western. To the Christian such curiosity was futile. Nature yielded her meaning to him through allegory, not through science. The natural world was for pagan and Christian full of spirits of light and darkness, ready to help or to hurt man and subject to control through magic or some divine power.

Science could not have a wide appeal when confidence in the reason in general was rare and in the empire became rarer. Rationalism was never popular and in all forms was the attribute of the philosophical mind. Reason, inquiring, logical, and critical, was the instrument and the satisfaction of the few. The decline of its effectiveness and self-sufficiency even among the minority was, like the change in aesthetic taste, a mark of the rise of popular and provincial mentality.

## THE FAILURE OF CLASSICAL ETHICS

Systems of ethics based on reason, though they had greater vogue than mathematics and natural science, did not gain acceptance by the generality of the ancient world nor maintain their hold over educated men. Moreover, the ethical philosophies were themselves in contradiction to the older classical ideal, the good life of the citizen. Reason first questioned the moral authority of the community of citizens and then questioned its own authority.

The early classic view of human nature was objective and external. Man lived among his fellows, participating in the household, clan, tribe and city. Virtue was in action, a matter of conduct rather than of thought or intention. Conduct and state of mind were not carefully distinguished, since there was no dualistic contrast of body, or matter, and mind, or spirit. Knowing and doing the right went together. The obligations of the good life were the observance of the rites of the gods and of the customary duties towards fellow-men, a well-formed body and common sense or reasonableness. The last meant moderation in behavior ("nothing too much"), achieved through the practical judgment of the fitness of things, of the sufficiency of means to their ends, that is, of harmony and proportion. Similarly form and content, the outer and the inner, were identified in art. Beauty of expression and worthiness of thought or purpose were merged in the fitness of the statue or the vase, the drama or the oration.

Reason was in this view reasonableness of behavior

supplementing the guidance of custom. But, when the shortcoming of the Greek city-state became evident as early as 400 B.C. and the laws and conventions of the community failed to satisfy men of broader horizons and freer thought, Socrates and his successors sought through reason to discover the principles of virtuous conduct, and custom was replaced among philosophers by reason as the touchstone of morality. The good life was to be the crown of philosophy, with the result that reason was exalted over conduct and philosophy itself became the good life. Happiness or unhappiness lay not in what happened to a man but in his attitudes and emotions. Virtue was less a matter of action than a state of mind. The highest good was within, an intellectual calm, independent of external circumstance and gained through the strength of the individual reason cultivated in the contemplative life. Thus not only the internal and the external but the individual and society were set apart and in opposition.

Rational self-sufficiency was common to the ethical philosophies of the Hellenistic period and the early empire. Stoicism, Epicureanism and Skepticism were at one in this aim. The Stoic did not withdraw from the turmoil of society as completely as did the Epicurean, for duty to the divine order of nature required him to play his part wherever it lay, and he dreamed even of the brotherhood of men through reason. For the Epicurean there was no duty nor providential order. His measure of values was solely in his own nature. Yet the Stoic was the more rigorously self-reliant and independent of circumstance in his struggle for repose of mind, since the

Epicurean's happiness was in the quiet circle of friends of the "Garden," free from anxiety and enjoying the refined pleasures of body and spirit. The Skeptic attained indifference to the changes of fortune by denying any truth to the reports of the senses. Perception was illusion and led only to opinions, about which the wise man must be calm while he perpetually suspended judgment. Reason was the guide accepted by the Stoic in the discovery of duty and by the Epicurean in the calculation of pleasure and pain. In Skepticism, however, reason overreached itself, for it had no guidance to offer for conduct save probability (which the more rigid Skeptics rejected as implying the test of approximation to truth) or custom once more. Even practical experience would be a blind guide without standards by which to judge it.

The philosophies, rationalist and individualist, reflected the loss of attachment to family groups and to the city. The decay of loyalty to the community involved its gods as well as its custom and law, for Greek and Roman paganism was the religion of society and provided the sanction for the family and for citizenship. Provincial loyalty to the empire was thus symbolized by the worship of Rome and Augustus (i.e., the emperor). Participation in the imperial bureaucracy and in local city-government, resort to the courts, use of legal documents, military service, attendance on the games, meant the recognition of the gods. Classic religion was official and formal, and its personal satisfaction was in proportion to the meaning of society to the individual. Religious and social obligations were indistinguishable. In the villages, agricultural routines and gods persisted with



such tenacity that the *pagani*, or country people, gave their name to paganism. In the cosmopolitan society of the cities, the forms of social worship both local and imperial came to have too little meaning to satisfy the individual, who seemed left to the mercy of Fortune, incomprehensible and inescapable. For him, philosophy offered the reason as a substitute, encouraging the adoption of personal standards of value that were non-social and largely non-material.

#### RISE OF FAITH

The philosophical appeal to the inner life of the mind was outdone in effectiveness by personal religions offering the inner life of faith. Even for the minority who might listen to the counsel of reason, it was weakened by Skepticism's despair of finding truth. The very number of paths proposed with assurance by various schools of philosophy gave occasion for mockery in the brilliant dialogues of the satirist Lucian. Few men could remain content, however, in his scornful superiority to human vanities. For most, this renunciation of the world as vain and of the wisdom of the world as illusory required the compensating alternative of otherworldly religion. Mystical faith and the skeptical extreme of rationalism were alike in their distrust of the world of appearance and change perceived by the senses; but the answer of the former was positive belief in a spiritual world, attested by divine revelation and emotional acceptance. Personal religion was the triumphant alternative to both pagan citizenship and philosophic reason. Several eastern cults, notably those of Isis, Mithra, the Great Mother

(of Asia Minor) and the Syrian Goddess, made wide appeal with their mysteries, or ritual dramas, giving purification from evil, communion with deity and assurance of salvation from death. The victorious embodiment of the religious spirit was Christianity.

Philosophy itself, taking refuge from Skepticism, sought the supernatural, which had never been absent from most of its systems as some sort of Absolute—the source of all creation or of order and law in nature, the ultimate Ideas of beauty, goodness, and truth, or the creative mind. The Stoicism, Pythagoreanism and Platonism of the empire aimed to know the divine reason, or God, through the elevation of the human mind above the material world and the confusion of the senses. The finest expression of this view was given by Plotinus, a third century Neo-Platonist of Alexandria. The highest activity of the reason was for him in the state of completely abstract thought in which thinking about concrete things and even particular ideas gave way to pure intellectual communion with the Absolute, a rationalist mystical experience and otherworldliness that closely approached religion. The disappearance of the practical, this-worldly reasonableness of classic thought was well illustrated by the strange blend of mystical philosophy and paganism which Julian (called the Apostate) in a brief and futile reign in the mid-fourth century sought to substitute for the Christian Church. Neo-Platonism lent itself only too well to the superstitions of the late empire, for smaller men than Plotinus were impatient of the effort necessary for the attainment of pure reason and

sought more immediate understanding and control of spiritual powers behind the physical world by resort to magic.

#### THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF LIFE<sup>1</sup>

Philosophy was seeking divine wisdom, but its means were still human reason and imagination. Here was the gulf between it and the religion of the Oriental cults and Christianity. "Hath not God," said St. Paul, "made foolish the wisdom of the world?" The Christian's wisdom was revealed and holy, grasped through emotional experience. Such a sudden conviction, vividly described in Augustine's *Confessions*, gave him that relief from the sense of sin and helplessness which he had not found in Neo-Platonism. Thus the word "wisdom" (*sophia*) was Christianized and gave its name to Justinian's great church at Constantinople, Hagia (Sancta, or holy) Sophia. Philosophy, or the love of wisdom, also turned Christian. By accepting revelation Greek reason gave up the task of discovering divine reason for itself and was content with giving intellectual form to Christian belief. This it was well fitted to do not only because of its background in the Platonic, Aristotelian and Stoic explanations of the rational order of the universe but also because of its own attempts to take the place of religion by bridging the gap between man and God. Philosophy was transmuted into theology.

As Christianity opposed and then mastered reason, so it did with the state. Its faith was individual and otherworldly. A man was not as to the Greeks a "po-

<sup>1</sup> The early Christian Church is treated in Erwin R. Goodenough's *The Church in the Roman Empire*, another of the Berkshire studies.

litical animal," but a soul journeying through a world of sin and suffering toward a heavenly city or everlasting punishment. Salvation was not for society but for private individuals without regard to their social position and obligations. The contrast with the pagan state was emphasized by the zealous monotheism of the Christians, who would brook the recognition of no other gods. The results were withdrawal from the world and persecution by the state, a conflict which must go on until the Church or paganism triumphed. The success of the Church under Constantine at the opening of the fourth century meant the substitution of the sanction of the Christian God for that of the pagan gods, and, before the end of the century, the removal of the altar of Victory from the Senate-House as a sign of the break with antiquity. Already the emperors had given up residence at Rome, and the popes soon replaced them and the Senate in the leadership of the imperial city. The city which Augustine called the city of the world thus became the seat of its rival the Church, or the "City of God." In much the same way bishops often succeeded imperial agents and curial aristocracies as the centers of authority and loyalty in the municipalities. The rôle of Christianity as rival, partner and heir of Rome has suggested to its enemies and friends that it was the destroyer of the antique state and culture. To make religious devotion bear the guilt of the decline in social responsibility was however too superficial even for the bitter anti-clerical Gibbon, who remarked with his usual mocking irony, "The sacred indolence of the monks was devoutly embraced by a servile and effeminate age, but

if superstition had not afforded a decent retreat, the same vices would have tempted the unworthy Romans to desert, from baser motives, the standard of the republic." Though his moral emphasis was exaggerated, he rightly recognized that the Church was the beneficiary rather than the cause of the change in the loyalties of ancient society.

To fill the place of citizenship and of reason as guides to the conduct of the good life, Christianity proposed the conviction of man's utter sinfulness and the teachings of Christ. The "humble and contrite heart" supplanted the self-sufficiency of the philosopher and found its strength not in the community of citizens but in God and the Church. Virtue lay in purification from earthly desires, best fulfilled in withdrawal into asceticism and contemplation. On the active side, it meant the spread of the Gospel and the loving aid of fellow-men regardless of self (the true "charity" of St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 13). These were difficult ideals even with reliance upon the doctrine of salvation through the Cross. The blessedness of the poor in spirit of the Sermon on the Mount was remote from the military life that dominated the late empire and the German states, and yet Christian morality was not vanquished. With the aid of Greek philosophy in its emphasis on renunciation and the inner virtues, including Stoic duty, asceticism and "charity" set the tone of the ethical teaching of the medieval church. This received fullest expression in the monastic tradition; but it succeeded in influencing even the barbaric martial virtues, so that out of them and of feudal personal loyalty emerged chivalry in the later Middle Ages with its ideal

of the knight of courtesy and honor. By him we are still influenced through the "gentleman" as a model of the good life. In morals as in other fields the Church and the Germans collaborated in constructing medieval out of ancient society.

Christianity provided also a view of history. Its fresh perspective gave the Roman world a new past. The Hebrews gained importance at the expense of the Greeks, and Moses supplanted Homer. This shift meant that the empires of the East replaced the Greek city-states as the forerunners of the Roman Empire. The succession of empires thus paralleled the story of the Hebrews and Christians as the people of God, with Rome and the Church as the culmination of each line of development. To this contrast and parallel Augustine gave distinctive expression by likening the two societies to the traditional classic community, the city. History was the epic of two cities, one worldly and subject to destruction and the other spiritual and enduring. Their course was in God's hands, and their end was the fall of Rome, the last monarchy, and the triumph of the heavenly city and of its earthly representative, the Church. The purpose was the salvation of the saints. Here was universal history, given unity of pattern by a monotheistic religion which attributed all power to an active Providence and explained all events by a divine plan.

The classic historians had never achieved a universal pattern or principle of history. To them it was the interplay of human will and of Fortune, or chance, in which the rôle and purposes of the law of nature were not clear. There was no definite goal towards which men were

surely moving, not even in the Stoic dream of the ideal city. Life went in cycles, and states decayed. The Roman Empire afforded a temporary unity for Mediterranean history, but it was not the ideal end of society. Historians and philosophers recognized that. A unified philosophy of history required a goal in the future. The Christian world-view provided such an end and linked the past, present and future of mankind. It thereby made one Church and one Empire the ideals of the Middle Ages, and furnished the ideas of unity, progress, and goal as the framework for the optimistic secular philosophies of history in modern Europe.

The Germanic kingdoms of the West had their own traditions and indeed their own histories (witness Gregory of Tours on the Franks in the sixth century), but they were linked by their Christianity. As Roman institutions and culture declined, this was their impressive tie with Mediterranean civilization. The empire was no longer universal. Authority and law were personal and local. Economic activity, as well as effective jurisdiction, centered in the landed estate. City life and communication had given way before the rise of rural self-sufficiency, until the agrarian community had become the typical social unit of western Europe. Language had lost its cosmopolitanism, and the distinct Romance tongues were in the making.

In this disintegration, the Church gave the Europeans not only a common loyalty but also means of intellectual and aesthetic expression. Christianity salvaged from the wreck of the cosmopolitan classic and Oriental culture of the Roman Empire an ecclesiastical Latin, a literary

tradition and a system of schooling, structural and decorative arts for the service of the churches, a philosophy of Greek reason turned theologian, and a world-history. These legacies reflected the influence of popular taste and understanding and thus were adapted to the use of uncultivated and rural peoples. The tradition of ancient civilization lived, with altered aspect, in the Middle Ages. The focus of the tradition was still Rome, which, like classical culture, was in the hands of the Church. The imperial city remained imperial in its claims upon men's allegiance by virtue of its transformation by the Papacy into the City of God.





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